

National Assembly Debates

PROCEEDINGS AND DEBATES OF THE NATIONAL ASSEMBLY OF THE FIRST SESSION (2006-2007) OF THE NINTH PARLIAMENT OF GUYANA UNDER THE CONSTITUTION OF THE CO-OPERATIVE REPUBLIC OF GUYANA HELD IN THE PARLIAMENT CHAMBER, PUBLIC BUILDINGS, BRICKDAM, GEORGETOWN

8th Sitting

14:00h Thursday, 19 January 2007

Part 1 of 3

MEMBERS OF THE NATIONAL ASSEMBLY (71)

Speaker (1)

The Hon. Hari N Ramkarran SC, MP, *Speaker of the National Assembly (Absent-on leave)*

Members of the Government (42)

(i) *People's Progressive Party/Civic (41)*

(ii) *The United Force (1)*

The Hon Samuel A A Hinds MP (Region # 10 - Upper Demerara/Upper Berbice), *Prime Minister and Minister of Public Works and Communications (Absent-on leave)*

The Hon Clement J Rohee MP, *Minister of Home Affairs*

The Hon Shaik K Z Baksh MP

Minister of Education

The Hon Dr Henry B Jeffrey MP

Minister of Foreign Trade and International Cooperation

The Hon Dr Leslie S Ramsammy MP

(Region # 6 - East Berbice/Corentyne), Minister of Health

The Hon Carolyn Rodrigues-Birkett MP

(Region # 9 - Upper Takutu/Upper Essequibo)

Minister of Amerindian Affairs

*The Hon Dr Ashni K Singh MP, *Minister of Finance*

*The Hon S Rudolph Insanally OR, CCH, MP (Absent-on leave)

Minister of Foreign Affairs

- The Hon Harry Narine Nawbatt MP
Minister of Housing and Water
- The Hon Robert M Persaud MP
(Region # 6 - East Berbice/Corentyne), Minister of Agriculture
- The Hon Dr Jennifer R A Westford MP
(Region # 7 - Cuyuni/Mazaruni), Minister of Public Service
- The Hon Kellawan Lall MP
Minister of Local Government and Regional Development
- *The Hon Doodnauth Singh SC, MP
Attorney General and Minister of Legal Affairs
- The Hon Dr Frank CS Anthony MP
Minister of Culture, Youth and Sport
- The Hon Brindley HR Benn MP
Minister of Transport and Hydraulics
- **The Hon Manzoor Nadir MP, *Minister of Labour*
- The Hon Priya D Manickchand MP
(Region No. 5 - Mahaica/Berbice) (Absent-on leave)
Minister of Human Services and Social Security
- The Hon Dr Desrey Fox MP
Minister in the Ministry of Education
- The Hon Dr Bheri S Ramsaran MP
Minister in the Ministry of Health
- The Hon Jennifer I Webster MP
Minister in the Ministry of Finance
- The Hon Manniram Prashad MP
Minister of Tourism, Industry and Commerce
- Mr Donald Ramotar MP
- Ms Grail Teixeira MP
- Mr Harripersaud Nokta MP
- Mrs Indranie Chandarpal MP, *Chief Whip*
- Ms Bibi S Shadick MP
(Region No. 3 -Essequibo Island/West Demerara)
- Mr Mohamed Irfaan Ali MP
- Mr Albert Atkinson JP, MP
(Region No. 8 - Potaro/Siparuni)

*Non-elected Minister ** Elected Member from The United Force ***Non-elected Member

Mr Komal Chand CCH, JP, MP
(Region No 3 - Essequibo Island/West Demerara)

Mr Bernard C DeSantos SC, MP
(Region # 4 - Demerara/Mahaica)

Mrs Shirley V Edwards JP, MP
(Region # 4 - Demerara/Mahaica)

Mr Mohamed F Khan JP, MP
(Region No. 2 - Pomeroon/Supemaam)

Mr Odinga N Lumumba MP

Mr Moses V Nagamootoo JP, MP

Mr Mohabir A Nandlal MP

Mr Neendkumar JP, MP
(Region No. 4 - Demerara/Mahaica)

***Mr Steve P Ninvalle MP, *Parliamentary Secretary*

Mr Parmanand P Persaud JP, MP
(Region No. 2 - Pomeroon/Supemaam)

Mrs Phiiomena Sahoye-Shury CCH, JP, MP
Parliamentary Secretary

***Mrs Pauline Sukhai MP, *Parliamentary Secretary*

Mr Dharamkumar Seeraj MP

Mr Norman A Whittaker MP
(Region No. 1 - Barima/Waini)

Members of the Opposition (28)

(i) Members of People's National Congress Reform-One Guyana (22)

Mr Robert HO Corbin MP, *Leader of the Opposition*

Mr Winston Murray CCH, MP

Mrs Clarissa S Riehl MP
Deputy Speaker of the National Assembly

Mr E Lance Carberry MP, *Chief Whip* (Absent - on leave)

Mrs Deborah J Backer MP

Mr Anthony Vieira MP

Mr Basil Williams MP

Dr George A Norton MP

Mrs Volda A Lawrence MP

Mr Keith Scott MP

*Non-elected Minister ** Elected Member from The United Force ***Non-elected Member

Ms Amna Ally MP
Mr James K McAllister MP
Mr Dave D Danny MP (Region # 4 - Demerara/Mahaica)
Mr Aubrey C Norton MP (Region # 4 - Demerara/Mahaica)
Mr Ernest B Elliot MP (Region # 4 - Demerara/Mahaica)
Mrs Judith David-Blair MP (Region #7 - Cuyuni/Mazaruni)
Mr Mervyn Williams MP
(Region # 3 - Essequibo Island/West Demerara)
Ms Africo Selman MP
Dr John Austin MP (Region No. 6 - East Berbice/Corentyne)
Ms Jennifer Wade MP (Region # 5 - Mahaica/Berbice)
Ms Vanessa Kissoon MP
(Region # 10 - Upper Demerara/Upper Berbice)
Mr Desmond Fernandes MP (Region # 1 - Barima/Waini)

(ii) Alliance For Change (5)

Mr Raphael GC Trotman MP
Mr Khemraj Ramjattan MP
Mrs Sheila V A Holder MP
Ms Chantalle L Smith MP
(Region # 4 - Demerara/Mahaica)
Mr David Patterson MP

(iii) Guyana Action Party/Rise Organize and Rebuild (1)

Mr Overall N Franklin MP

OFFICERS

Mr Sherlock E Isaacs Clerk of the National Assembly
Mrs Lilawtie Coonjah Deputy Clerk of the National Assembly

[Mrs Clarissa S Riehl, Acting Speaker assumes the Chair]

Commencement of Sitting: 14:03H

PRAYERS

[The Clerk reads the Prayers]

ANNOUNCEMENTS BY THE SPEAKER

Leave

The Acting Speaker: Honourable Members, the Honourable Speaker of the National Assembly Hon Hari N Ramkarran will be on leave for approximately six weeks. He has to undergo vitrio retina that is eye surgery overseas. We wish the Honourable Speaker successful treatment and a speedy recovery. During this period, I will be your Acting Speaker and I look forward to your cooperation and support.

**REQUEST FOR LEAVE TO MOVE THE
ADJOURNMENT OF THE NATIONAL**

**ASSEMBLY ON DEFINITE MATTERS OF
URGENT PUBLIC IMPORTANCE**

**APPLICATION OF THE VALUE-ADDED TAX
(VAT)**

Mr Raphael GC Trotman: Mde Speaker, I rise to ask that we consider a matter which I had written you about that is pertaining to the introduction of the Value- Added Tax (VAT), which myself and colleagues consider to be a matter of public urgent importance and which we believe a discussion of which would please this nation, because it would elucidate the many issues surrounding the application of this tax in Guyana. I trust, Mde. Speaker, that you have had sufficient time to consider my request which has been made in writing as to the Standing Orders in a letter dated 17 January 2007 and which I believe speaks for itself. If Madame wishes me to refer to any aspects of the letter, I am prepared to do so. But the motion is before this House and is so moved by me for an adjournment to discuss the issue of the Value Added Tax. Thank you.

The Acting Speaker: Thank you Honourable Member Mr Trotman, I did have your Motion and I did stop to consider whether it fell under the aegis of Definite Matters of Urgent Public Importance.

Firstly, the Value Added Tax has been implemented since 2 January 2007 and the issues you raised in your Motion begun almost immediately thereafter. There has been a previous sitting of this National Assembly

on 11 January of this year, at which sitting that Motion should have been correctly brought if you wanted it to fit under the umbrella of being very urgent. So although it is a current issue and it is still of public importance, the issue was not brought in a timely fashion.

Secondly, the Government has signalled its intention to bring remedial proposals in the form of a substantive bill and I think that is the Value-Added Tax (VAT) (Amendment) Bill 2007, Bill No 2/2007 which is on a Supplementary Order Paper for today. At this time when the Bill is going to be heard the issues of concern that you raised, could be properly ventilated. I will therefore, for these reasons, disallow this Motion at this time

Mr Raphael GC Trotman: Mde Speaker, if it pleases you, I of course will abide by your decision, respect it, had hoped that there would have been a departure from the very strict and narrow interpretation put on the Standing Order, but nonetheless I abide by your order. Suffice to say, however, that matters known today or known on the 17th January were not matters known on the 11 January and even though there was a sitting, I accept on the 11 January, there are matters which have arisen since, particularly a full page advertisement issued by the Private Sector Commission which was not available on the 11 January, but if that is the ruling, as your humble Parliamentarian, I abide. Thank you.

The Acting Speaker: Yes, that is my ruling.

NA 19 JANUARY 2007

INTRODUCTION OF BILLS

Presentation and First Reading

By the *Minister in the Ministry of Finance*:

VALUE ADDED TAX (AMENDMENT) BILL 2007 - BILL No. 3/2007

PUBLIC BUSINESS

(i) GOVERNMENT BUSINESS

MOTIONS

1. CONSIDERATION OF FINANCIAL PAPER NO 5/2006

ASSEMBLY IN COMMITTEE OF SUPPLY

Hon Jennifer I Webster: Mde Chairperson, in accordance with Article 171 (2) of the Constitution, I signify that Cabinet has recommended for consideration by the National Assembly, the Motion for the approval of the proposals set out in Financial Paper No 5/2006 – Supplementary Estimates, (Current

and Capital) for the period ending 31 December 2006 totalling \$1,721,362,439 and I now move the Motion.

Motion proposed:

The Chairperson: We will consider the Financial Paper as usual that is the items will be taken from both the Current and the Capital Estimates of Expenditure in order for which the Minister is responsible

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SECTION 'A' CURRENT ESTIMATES

Mr Robert H.O Corbin: Mde Chairperson, are you taking the whole page?

The Chairperson: No. We will take them one at a time where they are laid out.

ITEM 1 - AGENCY CODE 03 - MINSITRY OF FINANCE, PROGRAMME 031 - MINISTRY ADMINISTRATION - Chart of Account 6311

Question is proposed that the sum of \$100,000,000 for Agency Code 03-031 - Ministry of Finance, Ministry

Administration - Chart of Account 6311 - Rates and Taxes - stands part of the Estimates.

Mr Robert HO Corbin: Mde Chairperson, Item 1 - Ministry of Finance - Rates and Taxes - voted provision \$320, 626,000 - Supplementary provision \$100,000,000 -Could the Minister inform this Parliament whether this takes care of all Government buildings, including those buildings which were owned by GPL and for which the Town Council has claimed that no payment of taxes have been made. I have a further question if this is clarified.

The Chairperson: The Honourable Minister in the Ministry of Finance

Hon Jennifer I Webster: Mde. Chairperson, in response to the Honourable Member, Mr Corbin's question, the sum now being sought is \$100,000,000 and that sum of \$100,000,000 is not being utilised towards that. In fact, it is being utilised for Government's enhancement programme as it relates to the City of Georgetown. Guyana is scheduled to host several prestigious International events shortly and the sum is being utilised for rehabilitation of:

- Avenues along Main Street;
- Carmichael Street;
- Waterloo Street;
- Thomas and East Streets;
- Removal of derelicts;

- Maintenance of drainage canals and parapets;
- Clearing of verges along declared Public Roads and other Roads in the City; and
- Maintenance, resurfacing and patching of roads in the City

Mr Robert HO Corbin: Mde Chairperson, would the Minister then agree that this Head: - Rates and Taxes - inadequately describes the purpose to which this allocation is being sought and that it should properly be reflected somewhere else so that we can be heard because it says - to meet cost associated with works in the City of Georgetown, but it is under the Head - Rates and Taxes.

Secondly, whether the Minister would inform the House whether all the other outstanding Taxes for the City of Georgetown were paid in 2006?

The Chairperson: The Honourable Minister in the Ministry of Finance.

Hon Jennifer I Webster: Mde Chairperson, the sum of \$300,000,000 has been paid during the year 2006 to the City Council in respect of Rates and Taxes

Mr Robert HO Corbin: I think the Honourable Minister may have misunderstood my question. I am asking not how much was paid, but whether all that was due to the City Council has been paid and I asked specifically about buildings that were formally owned by the Government of Guyana, handed over to GPL to

which there is a running controversy to the detriment of the city, whether those amounts were paid in the \$300 Million approved earlier.

Hon Jennifer I Webster: Mde. Chairperson, I will submit that I do not think this is in keeping with the Financial Paper, but the information requested could be provided in writing.

Mr Winston S. Murray: Mde Chairperson, could the Honourable Minister kindly inform the National Assembly whether this sum of \$100,000,000 being sought is money that would be paid directly to the City Council for Rates and Taxes, which is the description of the Head and the purpose of the Head as set out in the Estimates?

The Chairperson: The Honourable Minister in the Ministry of Finance

Hon Jennifer I Webster: Mde Chairperson, I cannot provide that information at this time.

Mr Winston S Murray: Is it because of confidential reasons that you cannot provide the information or you do not have it?

Hon Jennifer I Webster: Mde Chairperson, I undertake to provide the information

Mr Winston S Murray: Okay.

Agency Code 03 - Ministry of Finance, Programme 031 - Ministry Administration - Chart of Account

6311 - Rates and Taxes - \$100,000,000 - agreed to and ordered to stand part of the Estimates.

ITEM 1 - AGENCY CODE 03 - MINISTRY OF FINANCE, PROGRAMME 031 - MINISTRY ADMINISTRATION - Chart of Account 6321

Question is proposed that the sum of \$80,809,723 for Agency Code 03 - Ministry of Finance, Programme 031 - Ministry Administration - Chart of Account 6321 - Subsidies and Contributions to Local Organisations - stands part of the Estimates.

Agency Code 03 - Ministry of Finance, Programme 031 - Ministry Administration - Chart of Account 6321 - Subsidies and Contributions to Local Organisations \$80,809,723 - agreed to and ordered to stand part of the Estimates.

ITEM 2 - AGENCY CODE 16 - MINISTRY OF AMERINDIAN AFFAIRS, PROGRAMME 161 - AMERINDIAN DEVELOPMENT - Chart of Account 6231

Question is proposed that the sum of \$77,760 for Agency Code 16 - Programme 161 - Amerindian Development - Chart of Account 6231 - Fuel and Lubricants - stands part of the Estimates.

Mr Winston S. Murray: Mde Chairperson, could the Honourable Minister say whether these monies for late registration of birth were related to ensuring that persons were able to register to vote for the elections of 2006? *[Interruption: 'Free! Free! Free!'* It is a question of fact, my friends.

The Chairperson: The Honourable Minister of Amerindian Affairs.

Hon Carolyn Rodrigues-Birkett: Mde Chairperson, that could probably be so, because some persons who requested Birth Certificates did indicate that was the reason, but this was an accelerated part of our Birth Certificate exercise where we focused on this particular group of people and we do not know who they voted for.

Mr Robert HO Corbin: Mde Chairperson, could the Honourable Minister say whether this facility of late registration and provision of money from the Treasury to do so, was applied across the country to other vulnerable communities where people could not have afforded?

Hon Carolyn Rodrigues-Birkett: Mde Chairperson, yes, this exercise actually started since 2003 and to date we have more that 10,000 birth certificates issued and this exercise is on-going up to the end of January this year. So yes, it was extended throughout the country but in Regions 1, 7, 8 and 9 to every one; in Regions 2, 3, 4, 5, 6 and 10, to the Amerindian communities in particular, but because we felt that other persons in Region 2, in Region 10 there were

facilities other than the Ministries available, since teams from the General Registration's Office also went to those areas

Mr Robert HO Corbin: Will the Honourable Member undertake to provide to this National Assembly (I know you do not have the answer now) the list of those details that she has provided.

Hon Carolyn Rodrigues-Birkett: Mde Chairperson, we have the list of every single person and that can be provided to the Honourable Member Mr Corbin.

Agency Code 16 - Ministry of Amerindian Affairs, Programme 161 -Amerindian Development, Chart of Account 6231 - \$577,760 - agreed to and ordered to stand part of the Estimates.

ITEM 2 - AGENCY CODE 16 - MINISTRY OF AMERINDIAN AFFAIRS, PROGRAMME 161 - AMERINDIAN DEVELOPMENT - Chart of Account 6261

Question is proposed that the sum of \$410,022 for Agency Code 16 - Ministry of Amerindian Affairs, Programme 161 - Amerindian Development - Chart of Account 6261 - Local Travel and Subsistence - stands part of the Estimates.

**Agency Code 16 - Ministry of Amerindian Affairs,
Programme 161 - Amerindian Development - Chart
of Account 6261 - Local Travel and Subsistence -
\$410,022 - agreed to and ordered to stand part of
the Estimates.**

**ITEM 2 - AGENCY CODE 16 - MINISTRY OF
AMERINDIAN AFFAIRS, PROGRAMME 161 -
AMERINDIAN DEVELOPMENT - Chart of
Account 6284**

Question is proposed that the sum of \$818,600 for
Agency Code 16 - Ministry of Amerindian Affairs,
Programme 161 - Chart of Account 6284 - Other -
stands part of the Estimates

**Agency Code 16 - Ministry of Amerindian Affairs,
Programme 161 - Amerindian Development - Chart
of Account 6284 - \$818,600 - agreed to and ordered
to stand part of the Estimates.**

**ITEM 3 - AGENCY CODE 31 - MINISTRY OF
PUBLIC WORKS AND COMMUNICATIONS,
PROGRAMME 311 - MINISTRY
ADMINISTRATION - Chart of Account 6321**

Question is proposed that the sum of \$143,000,000 for
Agency Code 31 - Ministry of Public Works and
Communications, Programme 311 - Ministry
Administration - Chart of Account 6321 - Subsidies

and Contributions to Local Organisations - stands part of the Estimates.

Mr Winston S. Murray: Mde Chairperson, could the Honourable Minister say whether there is a system in place to determine well in advance the need for maintenance of the pontoons at the Demerara Harbour Bridge and if such a system is or was in place, why was it not possible to properly plan for the repair and maintenance of these pontoons rather than have to come to the Contingencies Fund?

Hon BH Robeson Benn: Mde Chairperson, there is a maintenance system in place for the Demerara Harbour Bridge. In fact, I would say compare to a previous era, *[Laughter]* the maintenance and the continual operations of the Bridge have been exemplary. The fact of the matter is we need to repair at least fifty-two pontoons annually. You may know that the cost of steel has been increased by over 100 per cent ... *[Interruption: 'VAT!']* before VAT, over the last eighteen months. The provisions we seek are to take care of the increases in steel prices and all the other inputs which go into the maintenance of these pontoons. I think we are taking every step and we are making the effort to get the monies in time to take care and to continue the scheduled maintenance programme on time without impairing the usability and serviceability of the Bridge.

Mr Winston S. Murray: Mde Chairperson, if the Minister is saying that they repair fifty-two pontoons annually; is the Minister also saying that even though he was aware of that fact that the prices more than

doubled - increased by more than 100 per cent during the year 2006 for the components, because there is nothing that substantiates that - more than doubled? That is the question Sir

Hon BH Robeson Benn: Mde Chairperson, I believe that the increases in the price of steel have been going up not in jobs but on a straight line level incrementally and therefore the levels at which they are now and the point where we were aware that the provision had to be made available was recently. It was recently, so now that all the estimates are there and the scheduling that is required to keep the maintenance programme on time and in place for the maintenance is all very well known, the time and the requirements of the provision is here and now.

Mr Winston S. Murray: Mde Chairperson, could the Honourable Minister kindly point the attention of the National Assembly to the specific Code under Subsidies and Contributions to Local Organisations under his Ministry, where provision is made for the voted provision and will have to be now made for the Supplementary Provision?

Hon BH Robeson Benn: Mde Chairperson, I am not in a position specifically at this point in time to point to that Code. What I would say is that since the Honourable Member is so interested, I will provide that information to him, and also I am prepared to walk the Bridge with him and to examine with him the information with regard to the proper schedule preventative maintenance of the Demerara Harbour Bridge.

Mr Winston S. Murray: Mde Chairperson, is the Minister aware that by his answer there is opaqueness to this National Assembly in terms of his ability to determine where this money is being put so that we can monitor his expenditure? I am not interested in walking the Bridge with him. I am interested in monitoring the expenditure he undertakes in respect of the Bridge.

Hon BH Robeson Benn: Mde Chairperson, I think I did point out that I am prepared to provide all the information which would allow for the monitoring of the expenditure. I would like to take him for a walk
[Laughter]

Agency Code 31 - Ministry of Public Works and Communications, Programme 311 - Ministry Administration - Chart of Account 6321 - Subsidies and Contributions to Local Organisations - \$143,000,000 - agreed to and ordered to stand part of the Estimates.

ITEM 4 - AGENCY CODE 44 -MINISTRY OF CULTURE, YOUTH AND SPORT, PROGRAMME 441 - MINISTRY ADMINISTRATION - Chart of Account 6231

Question is proposed that the sum of \$1,500,000 for Agency Code 44 - Ministry of Culture, Youth and Sport, Programme 441 - Ministry Administration -

Chart of Account 6231 - Fuel and Lubricants - stands part of the Estimates.

Agency Code 44 - Ministry of Culture, Youth and Sport , Programme 44 - Ministry Administration - Chart of Account 6231 - Fuel and Lubricants - \$1,500,000 - agreed to and ordered to stand part of the Estimates.

ITEM 4 - AGENCY CODE 44 - MINISTRY OF CULTURE, YOUTH AND SPORT, PROGRAMME 311 - MINISTRY ADMINISTRATION - Chart of Account 6281

Question is proposed that the sum of \$17,955,000 for Agency Code 44 - Ministry of Culture, Youth and Sport, Programme 311 - Ministry Administration - Chart of Account 6281 - Security Services - stands part of the Estimates.

Mr Winston S. Murray: Mde Chairperson, could the Minister kindly explain why it is that he needs an additional \$17,955,000 as security expenditure over and above the \$5.5 Million voted for 2006, when historically both in 2004 and 2005 a sum of \$5.5 Million was proven adequate.

The Chairperson: The Honourable Minister of Culture, Youth and Sport

Hon Dr Frank CS Anthony: Mde Chairperson, over the years, the cost for these services has been going up

and currently these are liabilities that we have in terms of security.

Mr Winston S Murray: Mde Chairperson, does the Minister really think it is creditable for him to say to this National Assembly that he needs a three hundred percent increase for the same level of security in 2006 compared with the previous two years? You say yes to the nation.

The Chairperson: The Honourable Minister of Culture Youth and Sport

Hon Dr Frank CS Anthony: Mde Chairperson, again this is the answer that this is the cost of the services, if the Honourable Member would like, I can provide you with the details.

Mr Winston S. Murray: Mde Chairperson, is the Minister definitively saying that this additional sum of approximately \$18,000,000 is in no way related to the expansion of security services under this Head?

The Chairperson: The Honourable Minister of Culture, Youth and Sport

Hon Dr Frank CS Anthony: Mde Chairperson, again, these are for services that we currently have and this is the cost of these services.

The Chairperson: The Honourable Member Mrs Holder

Mrs Sheila VA Holder: Mde Chairperson, as a supplementary to the Honourable Minister, I would like to know to what extent this exceeds the amount

originally bid for such a service and whether the Minister considers that acceptable

The Chairperson: The Honourable Minister of Culture, Youth and Sport.

Hon Dr Frank CS Anthony: I do not have that information before me, but I can provide the Honourable Member with those details. So if you like, I will provide that to you.

The Chairperson: The Honourable Member Mr Corbin

Mr Robert H.O Corbin: Mde Chairperson, could the Minister inform us, whether these additional costs of such a large sum related to the same company, whether tenders were given out for this large expenditure and also whether he could inform the House, whether this expenditure had any thing to do with the sending of persons to Israel to learn internet espionage.

The Chairperson: The Honourable Minister of Culture Youth and Sport

Hon Dr Frank CS Anthony: Mde Chairperson, there again, I will offer to provide the Member with the information that we have for these services and pertaining to the second half of this question, I do not know what he is talking about.

The Chairperson: Yes, Mr Murray

Mr Winston S. Murray: Mde Chairperson, with great respect, could the Minister make a serious attempt to answer the question as to whether, the

security services are being provided by the same company as provided them in 2004 and 2005.

The Chairperson: The Honourable Minister of Culture, Youth and Sport

Hon Dr Frank CS Anthony: Again, I said I would provide the details; I do not have it before me

Mr Winston S. Murray: Well, as he is in the process of providing details, may I ask whether he could also provide perchance it is the same company, whether he went to tender to ensure or examine the possibilities of obtaining more competitive prices rather than paying the same contractor this kind of inflated level of costs.

Hon Dr Frank C.S Anthony: Again the details would be provided to the Honourable Member

The Chairperson: Alright, thank you.

Agency Code 44 - Ministry of Culture, Youth and Sport, Programme 311 - Ministry Administration - Chart of Account 6281 - Security Services - \$17,955,000 - agreed to and ordered to stand part of the Estimates.

ITEM 4 - AGENCY CODE 44 - MINISTRY OF CULTURE, YOUTH AND SPORT, PROGRAMME 311 - MINISTRY ADMINISTRATION - Chart of Account 6284

Question is proposed that the sum of \$33,675,000 for Agency Code 44 - Ministry of Culture, Youth and Sport, Programme 311 - Ministry Administration - Chart of Account 6284 - Other - stands part of the Estimates

Mr David Patterson: Mde Chairperson, Chart of Accounts 6284 - Other - Can the Honourable Minister of Culture, Youth and Sport explain the supplemental provision being sought now which states: *To meet cost associated with ICC World Cup Cricket 2007* and if this sum now represents a payment to Cacique Palace Hotel as an advance by the Government.

The Chairperson: The Honourable Minister of Culture Youth and Sport

Hon Dr Frank CS Anthony: Thank you Mde Chairperson, indeed this sum represents the payment to Cacique Palace Suite and Banquet Hall Inc and it represents payment for forty-nine rooms for the period of fifteen days.

Mr David Patterson: Mde Chairperson, I can recall in this Assembly, when the Honourable Minister sought the supplementary provision of \$168,750,000, he stated that sum was going to both Buddy's Hotel and Cacique Palace and they made payment to both when the question was put to him. I would like to know how come... [*Interruption: 'It is an additional payment.'*] Is this an additional payment?

The Chairperson: The Honourable Minister of Culture, Youth and Sport

Hon Dr Frank C S Anthony: Mde Chairperson, allow me to clarify to the Honourable Member, on the last occasion when I answered, my answer was very specific, the payments then was for Buddy's International Hotel and the payments now are for Cacique Palace. At that time, I was asked the question whether or not we would be making payments to Cacique and I said yes, but at that time, we did not request the money.

Agency Code 44 - Ministry of Culture, Youth and Sport, Programme 441 - Ministry Administration - Chart of Account 6284 - Other - \$33,675,000 - agreed to and order to stand part of the Estimates.

ITEM 5 - AGENCY CODE 45 - MINISTRY OF HOUSING AND WATER, PROGRAMME 451 - HOUSING AND WATER - Chart of Account 6321

Question is proposed that the sum of \$600,000,000 for Agency Code 45 - Ministry of Housing and Water, Programme 451 - Housing and Water - Chart of Account 6321 - Subsidies and Contributions to Local Organisations.

Mrs Volda A Lawrence: Mde Chairperson, could the Honourable Minister inform this House which Housing Schemes are being referred to here.

Hon Harry Nariñe Nawbatt: Mde Chairperson, the schemes were:

- Westbury Housing Scheme in Region 2;

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- Parfaite Harmon - two projects in Region
- Hope Estate;
- Lusignan Pasture;
- Block F Sophia - two projects;
- Hyde Park, Timehri - All in Region 4;
- Belvedere/Nigg in Region 6;
- No. 76 Village and No. 77 Village also in Region 6;
- Bartica in Region 7;
- West Watooka and Amelias Ward in Region 10

The Chairperson: The Honourable Member Mr Williams

Mr Mervyn Williams: Mde Chairperson, could the Honourable Minister say how much Parfaite Harmony would benefit in this regard and whether that amount allocated will be for the purpose of upgrading the road and how soon the road is expected to be completed.

Hon Harry Narine Nawbatt: The Parfaite Harmony Phase II Projects is going to cost \$88,000,000 for the construction of roads, drains and structures. Parfaite Harmony Phase III is for \$172,000,000 for the same construction of roads, drains and structures. It is in defects liability period now and the defects liability period would end in October of this year.

The Chairperson: The Honourable Member Mr Murray

Mr Winston S. Murray: Mde Chairperson, could the Minister kindly inform this House as to whether these sums of money both the originally voted provision and the supplementary provision are administered and expended by his Ministry?

The Chairperson: The Honourable Minister of Housing and Water

Hon Harry Narine Nawbatt: Yes. All the sums of monies voted in both the Original Appropriation and Supplementary Expenditure are being expended by the Ministry, but there has been contracted to contractors through the normal tendering procedure

Mr Winston S. Murray: Mde Chairperson; given the Minister's answer, would the Minister not agree that it is wrong to put these sums of money as Subsidies and Contributions to Local Organisations, since they are not subsidies and contributions to any local organisation, but rather expenditure by the Ministry; and would the Minister not further agree that since they are direct expenditure by the Ministry related to doing capital works, that those works should find themselves listed in the estimates of expenditure for the Ministry, so that they could be transparent and be properly voted on scheme by scheme by this National Assembly?

The Chairperson: The Honourable Minister of Housing and Water

Hon Harry Narine Nawbatt: Quite a long question, I recorded it. The question was whether they were properly under Subsidies and Contributions to Local Organisations. I would not know if the history - the past expenditure - came under that same head, but I can check it and confirm whether they are listed here under that head as they were previously done. I do not have the answer to that, but I can confirm that.

Mr Winston S. Murray: Mde Chairperson, if the Minister checks, and perchance they are, it is no excuse that they were historically done wrong to continue doing them wrong, would he undertake to properly categorise them in the future and to list them under the proper capital works of his Ministry, so that we can get transparency for the approval of these sums in the National Assembly?

Hon Harry Narine Nawbatt: Actually Mde Chairperson, they are executed under the Central Housing and Planning Authority and I suspect that is why it is describe as Contributions to Local Organisations. All the works were done under the authority of Central Housing and Planning Authority

Mr Winston S. Murray: So this means that the Ministry of Housing as such, does not directly execute these projects as he said or is responsible for their execution directly that they are done through the CHPA

Hon Harry Narine Nawbatt: Not the Ministry of housing per se, but the CHPA is an authority that falls

under the Ministry of Housing and provided for separately in the appropriation.

The Chairperson: The Honourable Members Mrs Judith David-Blair

Mrs Judith David-Blair: Mde Chairperson, could the Minister say for Bartica, which one of the housing schemes or which are the housing schemes and how much money is allocated for these works?

Hon Harry Narine Nawbatt: It is the West Indian Association, west of the secondary school in Bertica and it is for the construction of ... Oh, you did not ask that. It is for roads, drains and structures; it is 175ft by 14 ft long road and SBST surface and culverts. *[Pause]* Oh, sorry, you want to know the cost, it is \$9.589 Million.

The Chairperson: The Honourable Member Mr Elliot

Mr Ernest B Elliot: Mde Chairperson, I would like the Minister to say what the cost of the works at the Housing scheme at Hope and when the works will be completed?

Hon Harry Narine Nawbatt: Hope is \$53,000,000 and the works are in progress. I will see if I have the information here when it is going to finish. *[Pause]* No, I do not have that information here; I will let you have it.

**Agency Code 45 - Ministry of Housing and Water,
Programme 451 - Housing and Water - Chart of
Account 6321 - Subsidies and Contributions to
Local Organisations - \$600,000,000 - agreed to and
ordered to stand part of the Estimates.**

The Chairperson: Can we move on to the next item?

**ITEM 6 - AGENCY CODE 51 - MINISTRY OF
HOME AFFAIRS, PROGRAMME 512 -POLICE -
Chart of Account 6231**

Question is proposed that the sum of \$30,000,000 for
Agency Code 51 - Ministry of Home Affairs,
Programme 512 - Police - Chart of Account 6231 -
Fuel and Lubricants - stands part of the Estimates

Mr Winston S. Murray: Mde Chairperson, I am
looking at Chart of Account 6302, could the Minister
kindly say how many inmates have actually been
associated with the training, including scholarships in
these sums?

The Chairperson: I think Mr Murray we are on Item
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Mr Winston S. Murray: Mde Chairperson, I
apologise. It will give him more time to contemplate
and answer, because he knows the question up front.

**Agency Code 51 - Ministry of Home Affairs,
Programme 512 - Police - Chart of Account 6231 -**

Fuel and Lubricants - \$30,000,000 - agreed to and ordered to stand part of the Estimates.

ITEM 6 - AGENCY CODE 51 - MINISTRY OF HOME AFFAIRS, PROGRAMME 512 - POLICE - Chart of Account 6261

Question is proposed that the sum of \$71,800,000 for Agency Code 51 - Ministry of Home Affairs, Programme 512 - Police - Chart of Account 6261 - Local Travel and Subsistence - stands part of the Estimates.

Agency Code 51 - Ministry of Home Affairs, Programme 512 - Police - Chart of Account 6261 - \$71,800,000 - Local Travel and Subsistence - agreed to and ordered to stand part of the Estimates.

The Chairperson: We will now move to the next item.

ITEM 7 - AGENCY CODE 51 - MINISTRY OF HOME AFFAIRS, PROGRAMME 513 - PRISONS - Chart of Account 6222

Question is proposed that the sum of \$2,000,000 for Agency Code 51 - Ministry of Home Affairs, Programme 513 - Prisons - Chart of Account 6222 -

Field Materials and Supplies - stands part of the Estimates.

Agency Code 51 - Ministry of Home Affairs, Programme 513 - Prisons - Chart of Account 6222 - Field Materials and Supplies - \$2,000,000 agreed to and ordered to stand part of the Estimates.

ITEM 7 - AGENCY CODE 51 - MINISTRY OF HOME AFFAIRS, PROGRAMME 513 - PRISONS - Chart of Account 6231

Question is proposed that the sum of \$71,800,000 for Agency 51 - Ministry of Home Affairs, Programme 513 - Prisons - Chart of Account 6231 - Fuel and Lubricants - stands part of the Estimates.

Agency Code 51 - Ministry of Home Affairs, Programme 513 - Prisons - Chart of Account 6231 - Chart of Account 6231 - Fuel and Lubricants - \$71,800,000 - agreed to and ordered to stand part of the Estimates.

ITEM 7 - AGENCY CODE 51 - MINISTRY OF HOME AFFAIRS, PROGRAMME 513 - PRISONS - Chart of Account 6243

Question is proposed that the sum of \$2,000,000 for Agency Code 51 - Ministry of Home Affairs, Programme 513 - Prisons - Chart of Account 6243 - Janitorial and Cleaning Supplies - stands part of the Estimates.

Agency Code 51 - Ministry of Home Affairs, Programme 513 - Prisons - Chart of Account 6243 - Janitorial and Cleaning Supplies - agreed to and ordered to stand part of the Estimates.

ITEM 7 - AGENCY CODE 51 - MINISTRY OF HOME AFFAIRS, PROGRAMME 513 - PRISONS - Chart of Account 6292

Question is proposed that the sum of \$24,500,000 for Agency Code 51 - Ministry of Home Affairs, Programme 513 - Prisons - Chart of Account 6292 - Dietary - stands part of the Estimates.

Mr James K McAllister: Mde Chairperson, I know that the Minister is seeking supplementary for dietary and increase for inmates. I wish to ask the Minister if the current inmate population is greater than prisons capacity. And if so, how is this affecting security and safety of Prison Wardens in light of the recent incident at Mazaruni?

The Chairperson: The Honourable Minister of Home Affairs

Hon Clement J Rohee: Mde Chairperson, we at the Ministry of Home Affairs, at the request of the Guyana Prison Service, found it necessary to make certain readjustments with respect to dietary given the increased prison population, which increased to somewhere around 1,900 and this also became necessary because we found it important and vital to satisfy the demands for improved nutrition for the meals.

Mr James K McAllister: Mde Chairperson, I am not quite sure the Minister heard my question. I asked about the capacity of prisons whether inmate population is a greater capacity and if so, how is this affecting the security and safety of Prison Wardens and if I may ask, if so, what the Government is doing, what is his Ministry doing to address the situation?

The Chairperson: The Honourable Minister of Home Affairs

Hon Clement J Rohee: Mde Chairperson, I think the Head or the Sub-Head that we are dealing with is treating with dietary, the question that the Honourable Member is asking I think, is not relevant to the issue here.

Mr James K McAllister: Mde Chairperson, Could we have a ruling on that? *[Pause]*

The Chairperson: Would you care to give the question again - your base question, Mr McAllister?

Mr James K McAllister: Mde Chairperson, my base question is, whether the inmate's population is greater

than the prison capacity and I am asking the question in light of the need to come here to seek increase for dietary and to give the impression that that population was not expected.

The Chairperson: Honourable Minister, could you answer the question as close as possible as you can.

Hon Clement J Rohee: Mde Chairperson, I said in my response that due to the increased population of the Prisons, it obviously warranted an increase in dietary and in addition to that, not only was the population increased, we found it necessary to improve the nutritional value of the meals.

The Chairperson: The Honourable Member, Mr Vieira

Mr Anthony Vieira: Mde Chairperson, I wish to note that as a result of the Appendix presented on the question and motion presented by the Honourable Member, at this moment in time... at December 26 ...
[Interruption]

The Chairperson: Honourable Member, would you please ask the question?

Mr Anthony Vieira: The question I am asking is: why is it that in the prisons of this country we have 1,158 inmates who are convicted and 1,955 who are not convicted - awaiting trial?

The Chairperson: Under which Head are you asking that question please? Under which description - you see there, a number of descriptions?

Mr Anthony Vieira: Well, the same heading - the fact that the Honourable Member is having problems feeding them, perhaps he should give them a black cat.
[Noisy Interruption]

The Chairperson: Honourable Members, can we have some order in the House? *[Pause]*

Yes, Honourable Member, Mr Vieira; I am asking under what description.

Mr Anthony Vieira: Because I am making the observation, I am asking ... my question had to do with ... is that the reason why they cannot afford to feed the prisoners because they have such a large number of un-convicted people sitting there awaiting trial ... *[Interruption]*

The Chairperson: Could the Honourable Minister answer the question posed? *[Pause]* Alright, we will move to the next item.

**Agency Code 51 - Ministry of Home Affairs,
Programme 513 - Prisons - Chart of Account 6292 -
Dietary - \$24,500,000 - agreed to an ordered to
stand part of the Estimates.**

**ITEM 7 - AGENCY CODE 51 - MINISTRY OF
HOME AFFAIRS, PROGRAMME 513 - PRISONS
- Chart of Account 6293**

Question is proposed that the sum of \$400,000 for Agency Code 51 - Ministry of Home Affairs, Programme 513 - Prisons - Chart of Account 6293 - Refreshment and Meals - stands part of the Estimates.

Agency Code 51 - Ministry of Home Affairs, Programme 513 - Prisons - Chart of Account 6293 - Refreshment and Meals - \$400,000 - agreed to and ordered to stand part of the Estimates.

ITEM 7 - AGENCY CODE 51 - MINISTRY OF HOME AFFAIRS, PROGRAMME 513 - PRISONS - Chart of Account 6294

Question is proposed that the sum of \$1,500,000 for Agency 51 - Ministry of Home Affairs, Programme 513 - Prisons - Chart of Account 6294 - Other - stands part of the Estimates.

Agency Code 51 - Ministry of Home Affairs, Programme 513 - Prisons - Chart of Account 6294 - \$1,500,000 - agreed to and ordered to stand part of the Estimates.

ITEM 7 - AGENCY CODE 51 - MINISTRY OF HOME AFFAIRS, PROGRAMME 513 - PRISONS - Chart of Account 6302

Question is proposed that the sum of \$1,500,000 for Agency Code 51 - Ministry of Home Affairs, Programme 513 - Prisons - Chart of Account 6302 - Training (Including Scholarships) - stands part of the Estimates.

Mr Winston S. Murray: Mde Chairperson, I do not think that I need to repeat it. Do I have to?

The Chairperson: Yes.

Mr Winston S Murray: Mde Chairperson, the question I asked, was whether the Minister could kindly inform the National Assembly as to how many inmates at the Prisons have benefited from the training including scholarships for which additional provision is hereby sought?

The Chairperson: The Honourable Minister of Home Affairs

Hon Clement J Rohee: Mde Chairperson, I do not think any Government would provide funding for training of prisoners. [*Interruption: 'Why not? What?'*]...If I may, Mde Chairperson, the Honourable Member asked about scholarships for prisoners. When we refer to scholarships here as a training component of this supplementary, we refer to newly recruited officers as well as officers who were promoted within the Prisons Service, this was for the latter part of the year. Thank you, Mde Chairperson.

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**ITEM 8 - AGENCY CODE 53 - GUYANA
DEFENCE FORCE, PROGRAMME 531 -
DEFENCE HEADQUARTERS - Chart of Account
6221**

Question is proposed that the sum of \$4,000,000 for Agency Code 53 - Guyana Defence Force, Programme 531 - Defence Headquarters - Chart of Account 6221 - Field Materials and Supplies - stands part of the Estimates

**Agency Code 53 - Guyana Defence Force,
Programme 531 - Defence Headquarters - Chart of
Account 6221 - Field Materials and Supplies -
\$4,000,000 - agreed to and ordered to stand part of
the Estimates**

**ITEM 8 - AGENCY CODE 53 - GUYANA
DEFENCE FORCE, PROGRAMME 531 -
DEFENCE HEADQUARTERS - Chart of Account
6231**

Question is proposed that the sum of \$16,000,000 for Agency Code 53 - Guyana Defence Force, Programme 531 - Defence Headquarters - Chart of Account 6231 - Fuel and Lubricants - stands part of the Estimates.

Agency Code 53 - Guyana Defence Force, Programme 531 - Defence Headquarters - Chart of Account 6231 - Fuel and Lubricants - \$16,000,000 - agreed to and ordered to stand part of the Estimates

ITEM 8 - AGENCY CODE 53 - GUYANA DEFENCE FORCE, PROGRAMME 531 - DEFENCE HEADQUARTERS - Chart of Account 6255

Question is proposed that the sum of \$3,000,000 for Agency Code 53 - Guyana Defence Force, Programme 531 - Defence Headquarters - Chart of Account 6255 - Maintenance of Other Infrastructure - stands part of the Estimates.

Agency Code 53 - Guyana Defence Force, Programme 531 - Defence Headquarters - Chart of Account 6255 - Maintenance and Other Infrastructure \$3,000,000 - agreed to and ordered to stand part of the Estimates

ITEM 8 - AGENCY CODE 53 - GUYANA DEFENCE FORCE, PROGRAMME 531 - DEFENCE HEADQUARTERS - Chart of Account 6261

Question is proposed that the sum of \$ 2,000,000 for Agency Code 53 - Guyana Defence Force, Programme 531 - Defence Headquarters - Chart of Account 6261 - Local Travel and Subsistence - stands part of the Estimates.

Agency Code 53 - Guyana Defence Force, Programme 531 - Defence Headquarters - Chart of Account 6261 - Local Travel and Subsistence - \$2,000,000 - agreed to and ordered to stand part of the Estimates

ITEM 8 - AGENCY CODE 53 - GUYANA DEFENCE FORCE, PROGRAMME 531 - DEFENCE HEADQUARTERS - Chart of Account 6264

Question is proposed that the sum of \$15,000,000 for Agency Code 53 - Guyana Defence Force, Programme 531 - Defence Headquarters - Chart of Account 6264 - Vehicle Spares and Service. - stands part of the Estimates.

Agency Code 53 - Guyana Defence Force, Programme 531 - Defence Headquarters - Chart of Account 6264 - Vehicle Spares and Service -

\$15,000,000 - agreed to and ordered to stand part of the Estimates

ITEM 8 - AGENCY CODE 53 - GUYANA DEFENCE FORCE, PROGRAMME 531 - DEFENCE HEADQUARTERS - Chart of Account 6265

Question is proposed that the sum of \$5,000,000 for Agency Code 53 - Guyana Defence Force, Programme 531 - Defence Headquarters - Chart of Account 6265 - Other Transport Travel and Postage - stands part of the Estimates.

Agency Code 53 - Guyana Defence Force, Programme 531 - Defence Headquarters - Chart of Account 6265 - Other Transport Travel and Postage - \$5,000,000 - agreed to and ordered to stand part of the Estimates

ITEM 8 - AGENCY CODE 53 - GUYANA DEFENCE FORCE, PROGRAMME 531 - DEFENCE HEADQUARTERS - Chart of Account 6271

Question is proposed that the sum of \$ 12,000,000 for Agency Code 53 - Guyana Defence Force, Programme 531 - Defence Headquarters - Chart of Account 6271 - Telephone Charges - stands part of the Estimates.

Agency Code 53 - Guyana Defence Force, Programme 531 - Defence Headquarters - Chart of Account 6271 - Telephone Charges - \$12,000,000 - agreed to and ordered to stand part of the Estimates

ITEM 8 - AGENCY CODE 53 - GUYANA DEFENCE FORCE, PROGRAMME 531 - DEFENCE HEADQUARTERS - Chart of Account 6282

Question is proposed that the sum of \$4,000,000 for Agency Code 53 - Guyana Defence Force, Programme 531 - Defence Headquarters - Chart of Account 6282 - Equipment and Maintenance - stands part of the Estimates.

Agency Code 53 - Guyana Defence Force, Programme 531 - Defence Headquarters - Chart of Account 6282 - Equipment and Maintenance - \$4,000,000 - agreed to and ordered to stand part of the Estimates

ITEM 8 - AGENCY CODE 53 - GUYANA DEFENCE FORCE, PROGRAMME 531 - DEFENCE HEADQUARTERS - Chart of Account 6284

Question is proposed that the sum of \$1,000,000 for Agency Code 53 - Guyana Defence Force, Programme 531 - Defence Headquarters - Chart of Account 6284 - Cleaning and Extermination Services - stands part of the Estimates.

Agency Code 53 - Guyana Defence Force, Programme 531 - Defence Headquarters - Chart of Account 6284 - Cleaning and Extermination Services \$1,000,000 - agreed to and ordered to stand part of the Estimates

ITEM 8 - AGENCY CODE 53 - GUYANA DEFENCE FORCE, PROGRAMME 531 - DEFENCE HEADQUARTERS - Chart of Account 6294

Question is proposed that the sum of \$31,000,000 for Agency Code 53 - Guyana Defence Force, Programme 531 - Defence Headquarters - Chart of Account 6294 - Other - stands part of the Estimates.

Agency Code 53 - Guyana Defence Force, Programme 531 - Defence Headquarters - Chart of Account 6294 - Other - \$31,000,000 - agreed to and ordered to stand part of the Estimates

**ITEM 9 - AGENCY CODE 71 -REGION 1:
PROGRAMME 712 - PUBLIC WORKS - Chart of
Account 6231**

Question is proposed that the sum of \$3,654,000 for Agency Code 71 - Region 1: Programme 712 - Public Works - Chart of Account 6231 - Fuel and Lubricants - stands part of the Estimates.

The Chairperson: The Honourable Member Mr Fernandes

Mr Desmond Fernandes: Mde Chairperson, could the Honourable Minister say why the additional cost of fuel, when in Region 1, the Central Administration, Mabaruma do not have adequate supply of electricity during the year. It is like five hours a night; some nights no current?

The Chairperson: The Honourable Minister of Public Works

Hon BH Robeson Benn: Mde Chairperson, I am not aware at this point in time of the specific details with regard to the hours of operation or the non-provision of the services at Region 1, but the money is required to meet additional expenditure associated with the supply of electricity as a result of increase fuel prices. I think we are also aware that fuel prices have increased over the last year or so. Over the last two or three weeks, it has moved from \$65 a barrel to \$52, but the base year cost of a year ago would be somewhere around \$40 or so. So the increased provision sought is to take care of increases in prices.

The Chairperson: The Honourable Member Mrs David-Blair

Mrs Judith David-Blair: Mde Chairperson, can the Honourable Minister say if this \$40,000,000 that was voted for Region 1, how many hours he has used to determine this cost, if the Member Mr Fernandes is saying they are not having reliable electricity service, if he calculated the hours and what effect it has now knowing that the service is not properly provided for?

The Chairperson: The Honourable Minister of Public Works

Hon BH Robeson Benn: Mde Chairperson I think the increase is only a ten percent increase on the over-all sum - just less than ten percent. We do not have here at the moment the specific number of hours used in the calculation. As I explained before, the increases in the prices related to both the fuel and the lubricants are known to all and sundry and so the additional provision sought is more than reasonable and in fact if we do have the provision as sought, the issues related to the hours of working will be addressed.

The Chairperson: The Honourable Member Mrs Blair

Mrs Judith David-Blair: Could the Honourable Minister say what criteria he used to arrive at this sum?

Hon BH Robeson Benn: Mde Chairperson, the criteria used would be provided to the Honourable Member.

Agency Code 71 - Region : Programme 712 - Public Works - Chart of Account 6231 - Fuel and Lubricants - \$\$3,654,000 - agreed to and ordered to stand part of the Estimates.

ITEM 9 - AGENCY CODE 71 - REGION 1: PROGRAMME 712 - PUBLIC WORKS - Chart of Account 6281

Question is proposed that the sum of \$1,278,722 for Agency Code 71: Programme 712 - Public Works - Chart of Account 6281 - Security Services - stands part of the Estimates.

Agency Code 71 - Region 1: Programme 712 - Public Works - Chart of Account 6281 - Security Services - \$1,278,722 - agreed to and ordered to stand part of the Estimates.

The Chairperson: Can we move to the next item?

ITEM 10 - AGENCY CODE 71 - REGION 1: PROGRAMME 713 - EDUCATION DELIVERY - Chart of Account 6231

Question is proposed that the sum of \$1,500,000 for Agency Code 71 - Region 1: Programme 713 -

Education Delivery - Chart of Account 6231 - Fuel and Lubricants - stands part of the Estimates.

Agency Code 71 - Region 1: Programme 713 - Education Delivery - Chart of Account 6231 - Fuel and Lubricants - \$1,500,000 - agreed to and ordered to stand part of the Estimates.

ITEM 10 - AGENCY CODE 71 - REGION 1: PROGRAMME 713 - EDUCATION DELIVERY - Chart of Account 6281

Question is proposed that the sum of \$1,210,846 for Agency Code 71 - Region 1: Programme 713 - Education Delivery - Chart of Account 6281 - Security Services - stands part of the Estimates.

The Chairperson: The Honourable Member Miss Anna Ally

Miss Anna Ally: Mde Chairperson, security in schools is extremely fragile; could the Minister say whether all the schools in Region 1 have Security?

The Chairperson: The Honourable Minister of Education or whoever will answer for this Agency?

Hon Kellawan Lall: Mde Chairperson, I cannot say at this moment if each and every school has a Guard, but I do know that this expenditure was to meet the cost of additional Guard Services for the educational sector in Region 1.

Agency Code 71 - Region 1: Programme 713 - Education Delivery - Chart of Account 6281 - Security Services - agreed to and ordered to stand part of the Estimates.

ITEM 11 - AGENCY CODE 71 - REGION 1: PROGRAMME 714 - HEALTH SERVICES - Chart of Account 6231

Question is proposed that the sum of \$3,000,000 for Agency Code 71 - Region 1: Programme 714 - Health Services - Chart of Account 6231 - Fuel and Lubricants - stands part of the Estimates

Agency Code 71 - Region 1: Programme 714 - Health Services - Chart of Account 6231 - Fuel and Lubricants - \$3,000,000 - agreed to and ordered to stand part of the Estimates.

ITEM 12 - AGENCY CODE 74 - REGION 4: PROGRAMME 74 2 - AGRICULTURE - Chart of Account 6281

Question is proposed that the sum of \$692,000 for Agency Code 71 - Region 4: Programme 742 - Agriculture - Chart of Account 6281 - Security Services - stands part of the Estimates.

The Chairperson: The Honourable Member Mr Ernest Elliot

Mr Ernest B Elliot: Mde Chairperson, I would like to ask the Minister what has caused this increase.

The Chairperson: The Honourable Minister of Local Government and Regional Development

Hon Kellawan Lall: Mde Chairperson, this increase in additional expenditure on security is for additional hours that some Guards had to operate and also an increase in the number of Guards. There was an increase of twenty three Guards and some of these were asked to work additional hours and this was what accounted for the increase in expenditure.

Agency Code 74 - Region 4: Programme 742 - Agriculture - Chart of Account 6281 - Security Services - \$692,000 - agreed to and ordered to stand part of the Estimates.

ITEM 13 - AGENCY CODE 74 - REGION 4: PROGRAMME 744 - EDUCATION DELIVERY - Chart of Account 6281

Question is proposed that the sum of \$13,495,000 for Agency Code 74 - Region 4: Programme 744 - Education Delivery - Chart of Account 6281 - Security Services - stands part of the Estimates.

The Chairperson: The Honourable Member Mr Elliot

Mr Ernest Elliot: I would like to ask the same thing with Education Delivery - Security Services. I would like to know what really caused this expenditure..

The Chairperson: The Honourable Minister of Local Government and Regional Development

Hon Kellawan Lall: Mde Chairperson, this increase in additional expenditure on security is for additional hours that some Guards had to operate and also an increase in the number of Guards. There was an increase of twenty three Guards and some of these were asked to work additional hours and this was what accounted for the increase in expenditure.

Miss Amna Ally: Mde Chairperson, Item 13 - Education Delivery, Chart of Account 6281 - In Region 4 many schools are affected by theft and vandalism, could the Minister say, whether this increase sum will take care of security for all the schools?

Secondly, could the Minister say whether the security would be provided for the entire twenty four hours per day as well as week-ends and holidays?

The Chairperson: The Honourable Minister of Local Government and Regional Development

Hon Kellawan Lall: Mde Chairperson; I really cannot give the details to that question at the moment and I would not be able to say if there is going to be a

halt in stealing; I cannot say that at the moment. I can provide some additional information exactly as to how many Guards there are if indeed all the schools are secured and that kind of information I can provide. I do not really have the details at the moment.

The Chairperson: The Honourable Member Miss Amna Ally

Miss Amna Ally: Mde Chairperson, in view of the response by the Minister, may I ask that the Minister consider examining this matter of security. I do not know if it is him or the Honourable Minister of Education, security in schools and at least come up with some answers as to whether this money could be used for security in schools twenty-four hours per day, week-ends and holidays? It is a serious problem that schools are experiencing right now.

The Chairperson: The Honourable Member Mr Elliot

Mr Ernest B Elliot: Mde Chairperson, I would like the Minister to say what is the situation, because if the Honourable Member is talking about Region 4, I want to know specifically what the position with Region 4 East Coast, East Bank and the High-way, in terms of security for the schools?

The Chairperson: The Honourable Minister of Local Government and Regional Development

Hon Kellawan Lall: Mde Chairperson, I said that I will provide the information as regards the entire Region 4.

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The Chairperson: Honourable Members, we will now move to the next page.

SECTION 'B' - CAPITAL ESTIMATES

ITEM 1 - DIVISION 508 - MINISTRY OF AGRICULTURE - Subhead 13003

Question is proposed that the sum of \$21,014,098 for Division 508 - Ministry of Agriculture - Subhead 13003 - Rehabilitation of D and I Areas - stands part of the Estimates.

The Chairperson: The Honourable Member Mr McAllister

Mr James K McAllister: Mde Chairperson, I noticed that the Minister is seeking \$21,000,000 for transportation, repairs and painting of unifloat pontoons, I wonder if the Honourable Minister can say where unifloats are located and what equipment is loaded on the unifloats and what was the nature of repairs undertaken and who was the contractor?

The Chairperson: The Honourable Minister of Agriculture

Hon Robert M Persaud: Mde Chairperson, the unfloats are being designed and fabricated for the purposes of accommodating excavators to work in the East Demerara Water Conservancy; one set would work there and then a special design for the Pomeroon River for us to undertake excavation works. These unfloats are those which the Demerara Harbour Bridge no longer uses and then they will be fabricated and so design. The Company is Courtney Benn Contracting Company which has undertaken this specific work. I must add that we have done similar work in the past and the unfloats are in operation particularly in the East Demerara Water Conservancy

Division 508 - Ministry of Agriculture - Subhead 13003 - Rehabilitation of D and I Areas - \$21,014,098 agreed to and ordered to stand part of the Estimates.

ITEM 2 - DIVISION 516 - MINISTRY OF HEALTH - Subhead 12014

Question is proposed that the sum of \$46,606,068 for Agency 516 - Ministry of Health - Subhead 12014 - Ministry of Health - Buildings - stands part of the Estimates.

Division 516 - Ministry of Health - Subhead 12014 - Ministry of Health - Buildings - \$46,606,068 - agreed to and ordered to stand part of the Estimates.

ITEM 3 - DIVISION 520 - MINISTRY OF PUBLIC WORKS AND COMMUNICATIONS - Subhead 26003

Question is proposed that the sum of \$214,000,000 for Division 520 - Ministry of Public Works and Communication - Subhead 26003 - Electrification Programme - stands part of the Estimates.

The Chairperson: The Honourable Member Mr Murray

Mr Winston S. Murray: Would the Honourable Minister kindly say whether the Electrification Programme described herein is the same as the Rural Electrification Programme or is it another?

The Chairperson: The Honourable Minister of Transport and Hydraulics

Hon BH Robeson Benn: Mde Chairperson, this provision relates to the un-served area of the Electrification Programme and the money is intended to co-finance the loss reduction investment within GPL and with extensions.

Mr Winston S. Murray: I would like to thank the Minister for that answer. Could the Minister then inform the National Assembly whether there is any

disruption in the flow of specific funds for this project from the IDB, this is where, given the Press reports that were seen not so long ago, in respect to this project?

The Chairperson: The Honourable Minister of Transport and Hydraulics

Hon BH Robeson Benn: Mde Chairperson, I am aware that there have been some discussions with the IDB with regard to the flow of funding for the project, the specific information with regard to that can be provided later, but the situation that we have is that, the provision relates to co-financing of the project itself.

The Chairperson: The Honourable Member Mr Murray

Mr Winston S. Murray: Mde Chairperson, is the Minister aware that co-financing infers that there is a partner or some one else who is financing and is he prepared to say whether or not that partner resumes contribution to this project that the Government would be prepared to go ahead and fund it on its own and that is why the Minister is going ahead notwithstanding this disruption?

The Chairperson: The Honourable Minister of Transport and Hydraulics

Hon BH Robeson Benn: Mde Chairperson, the Government is in partnership with the IDB with regard to this project. Obviously as you go along there are issues which arise from time to time with regard to the

smooth flow of the project, but the Government is intended that the un-served areas would be provided with electricity and that all the facilities will be put in place ultimately for those areas which have not been provided with electricity over the years to be provided with those services.

Mr Winston S. Murray: Mde Chairperson, just for clarity, would it be right to infer from that answer Mr Minister, that the Government is prepared if necessary to finance this project on its own?

The Chairperson: The Honourable Minister of Transport and Hydraulics

Hon BH Robeson Benn: I can say on behalf of the Government, that the government intends that those areas which are not serviced by electricity in the medium and long term will be serviced by electricity. I think, that is what I am prepared to say on behalf of the Government.

Division 520 - Ministry of Works and Communications - Subhead 26003 - Electrification Programme - \$214,000,000 - agreed to and ordered to stand part of the Estimates.

ITEM 4 - DIVISION 527 - MINISTRY OF LOCAL GOVERNMENT AND REGIONAL DEVELOPMENT - Subhead 19004

Question is proposed that the sum of \$4,185,000 for Division 527 - Ministry of Local Government and Regional Development - Subhead 19004 - Infrastructure Development - stands part of the Estimates.

Division 527 - Ministry of Local Government and Regional Development - Subhead 19004 - Infrastructure Development - \$4,185, 000 - agreed to and ordered to stand part of the Estimates.

ITEM 4 - DIVISION 527 - MINISTRY OF LOCAL GOVERNMENT AND REGIONAL DEVELOPMENT - Subhead 24001

Question is proposed that the sum of \$4,000,000 for Division 527 - Ministry of local Government and Regional Development - Subhead 24001 - Land Transport - stands part of the Estimates.

Division 527 - Ministry of Local Government and Regional Development - Subhead 24001 - Land Transport - \$4,000,000 - agreed to and ordered to stand part of the Estimates.

ITEM 4 - DIVISION 527 - MINISTRY OF LOCAL GOVERNMENT AND REGIONAL DEVELOPMENT - Subhead 36001

Question. is proposed that the sum \$11,700,00 for Division 527 - Ministry of Local Government and Regional Development - Subhead 36001 - Solid Waste Disposal Programme - stands part of the Estimates.

The Chairperson: The Honourable Member Mr Murray

Mr Winston S. Murray: Mde Chairperson, could the Honourable Minister kindly inform the National Assembly whether this is the last sum of money having to do with maintaining the Mandela land-filled site and if it is not, could he tell this National Assembly for how much longer Government intends to keep this Mandela land-filled site operational?

The Chairperson: The Honourable Minister of Local Government and Regional Development

Hon Kellawan Lall: Thank you, Mde Chairperson, this sum of money is to meet some of our contractual obligations. The IDB which is funding this programme has paid seventy percent of the cost of a particular element of this project and the Government has to pay thirty percent. This \$11.7 million is to meet that expenditure. I am not very clear if this is going to be the last sum of money to be spent on this project, I do know that we need to close the Mandela-Avenue land-filled site in the short term. That will need some expenditure. I do not know what will be the cost of bringing a final closure to it. There is a plan by the

Government of Guyana to open a new land-filled site in Eccles as we go along, and that project gets underway, we have to move to the final closure of the Mandela-Avenue land-filled site. So the answer to the question is yes in the foreseeable future. In order to bring closure to that site there may be some expenses incur.

The Chairperson: The Honourable Member Mr Murray

Mr Winston S. Murray: Without appearing to press the Minister unduly and I do not mean to do this; could he kindly indicate whether there is a target date, because this land-fill site ... would the Minister not agree, is becoming increasingly a public hazard threat? So is he in a position to state a target date by which at least, I believe, the Ministry ought to have some target date for the closure of this one and the opening of the other.

The Chairperson: The Honourable Minister of Local Government and Regional Development

Hon Kellawan Lall: Mde Chairperson, I really do not have a date on which I can say at the moment that this is going to be the date or the approximate time when we will close the Mandela land-filled site. I think it will have to do with the movement towards bringing into operation of the land-filled site in Eccles and the specific dates for these things to come into being, I do not have at hand, but there is some documentation on this matter; I can forward them to the Honourable Member Mr Murray.

The Chairperson: The Honourable Member Mr McAllister

Mr James K McAllister: Mde Chairperson, I wonder if the Honourable Minister is aware that the Haags Bosch site is two years away and that the Mandela land-filled site is at capacity and therefore we are faced with a solid waste crisis on our hand since the Government seem not to have any option in which to treat solid waste in the short-term.

The Chairperson: The Honourable Minister of Local Government and Regional Development

Hon Kellawan Lall: I am aware of that Mde Chairperson.

Mr James K McAllister: Well then, Mde Chairperson, could the Honourable Minister say what is the Government doing to address this looming solid waste crises that is going to pose serious health hazards to the people in this country?

The Chairperson: The Honourable Minister of Local Government and Regional Development.

Hon Kellawan Lall: Mde Chairperson, I wish to repeat, that the Government of Guyana is at the moment pursuing the sources of funding to make the Eccles land-filled site operational. I was asked for some specific dates, I have agreed to provide that information to Mr Murray and I will copy it to the other Honourable Member.

The Chairperson: The Honourable Member Mr James McAllister

Mr James K McAllister: Mde Chairperson, I heard the Minister's answer, but the question I asked the Minister was; if he was aware that Haags Bosch site is two years away and that Mandela is at capacity and so therefore, it is not an issue of moving from Mandela to Haags Bosch, but we need to have something in the interim and what is the Minister doing, what is the Government doing to address this problem?. It cannot be Haags Bosch, it has to be something else you are doing, Sir.

The Chairperson: Honourable Minister, do you want to reply?

Hon Kellawan Lall: Mde Chairperson, I do not know what else I can say, but for argument sake, let me say this. We have not signed up on this project as yet. I do know that it will take about eighteen months to come into being and the eighteen months; I do not know when it is going to start, so I cannot say definitively now that Haags Bosch is going to come in two years time. I cannot say that. It will depend on when we sign up on the funding and from what time we will start counting. But I do know and I will repeat that the Government of Guyana is aware of the situation and we are working towards a programme to deal with the solid waste disposal in the city and the surrounding areas.

The Chairperson: That is the answer.

The Honourable Member Mr McAllister

Mr James K McAllister: Mde Chairperson, a follow-up; could the Minister say therefore, since the Government is working on this issue, if sites have been identified for consideration and if so, what are those sites?

The Chairperson: Honourable Minister

Hon Kellawan Lall: Mde Chairperson, the Honourable Member himself just mentioned the site that we are working on at Eccles.

Division 527 - Ministry of Local Government and Regional Development - Subhead 36001 - Solid Waste Disposal Programme - \$11,700,00 - agreed to and ordered to stand part of the Estimates.

ITEM 5 - DIVISION 541 - MINISTRY OF CULTURE, YOUTH AND SPORT - Subhead 24001

Question is proposed that the sum of \$168,834,400 - Division 541 - Ministry of Culture and Sport - Subhead 24001 - Land Transport - stands part of the Estimates.

The Chairperson: The Honourable Member Mr Winston Murray

Mr Winston S. Murray: Mde Chairperson, could the Honourable Minister say whether these are the BMWs that have been referred to in the Press recently that the

Government is going to dispose to the World Cup and if they are, could he say how many in number they are going to be importing?

The Chairperson: The Honourable Minister of Culture, Youth and Sport

Hon Dr. Frank CS Anthony: Mde Chairperson, indeed this represents the cost for the BMWs; there are thirteen BMWs cars and seven BMW SUVs.

The Chairperson: The Honourable Member Mr Murray

Mr Winston S. Murray: Mde Chairperson could the Honourable Minister say whether this cost of G\$168 million, which is recoverable at least in part through the sale subsequent to the World Cup of these vehicles or will they be retained for fat cats? *[Noisy Interruption]* Mde Chairperson, I withdraw that

The Chairperson: Could we have some order please?

The Honourable Minister of Culture, Youth and Sport

Hon Dr Frank CS Anthony: Mde Chairperson, indeed our understanding is that, during the World Cup these vehicles would be rented to the TOMS, so we will be receiving some money and the intension also is afterwards to sell them.

The Chairperson: The Honourable Member Mr Anthony Vieira

Mr Anthony Vieira: Mde Chairperson, could the Minister say if the Government would be importing

these vehicles directly or they would be dealing through an Agent?

The Chairperson: The Honourable Minister of Culture, Youth and Sport

Hon Dr Frank C S Anthony: This is being done through an Agent BMWs Agent in Guyana, which is Prestige Motor Inc.

The Chairperson: The Honourable Member Mr McAllister

Mr James K McAllister: Mde Chairperson, the Press in Barbados is reporting that the arrangement for the BMWs in Barbados is that the ICC is purchasing the vehicles and after use, it would give the Government of Barbados the option to buy or if the Government does not take up the offer to sell to persons who are interested. I wish to ask the Minister therefore, why is the arrangements here different, why is the Government of Guyana has to expend money up front on this thing and when our sister countries are not having to doing so?

Mr Winston S. Murray: Just to supplement the question so that he could answer, because it very much related. Did the Ministry or the Government consider leasing or renting such vehicles for the duration of the event thereby saving taxpayers money?

The Chairperson: The Honourable Minister of Culture, Youth and Sport.

Hon Dr Frank C.S Anthony: Thank you again for the question. The arrangement with all the LOCs that is the Local Organising Committees is that you have to make these vehicles available for the TOMS. ICC is not buying the vehicles and then giving Government options, you have to have the vehicle in country and that is why as part of the agreement that we signed to host these events, we have to have these vehicles. We have considered the various options, the leasing option and this is the best option that we have and that is why we are pursuing this avenue.

The Chairperson: The Honourable Member Mr Raphael Trotman

Mr Raphael GC Trotman: Thank you Mde Chairperson, can the Honourable Minister say whether he accepts that given the value of \$168 million being the value of this contract, that the Agent into whose hands this money is going to be placed, should be an Agent that is of high repute and therefore can he say who are the Principals/Owners of Prestige Motors Inc. in Guyana?

The Chairperson: The Honourable Minister of Culture, Youth and Sport

Hon Dr Frank CS Anthony: Again the Agency here, this is the dealer for BMWs and the Principals, I do not have the name, but I can make that available to you.

The Chairperson: The Honourable Member Mr Dave Danny

Mr Dave D Danny: Mde Chairperson, can the Minister say, who will be using these vehicles?

Hon Dr Frank CS Anthony: Thank you again, I am sorry to use the jargon, but TOMS really means Teams, Officials, Media and Sponsors.

The Chairperson: The Honourable Member Mr Anthony Vieira

Mr Anthony Vieira: I am sorry to belabour the point, but can the Honourable Minister say if he is aware of one of the major holders of Precision Motors is Mr Reepu Daman Persaud's son?

The Chairperson: Honourable Minister, do you wish to answer?

The Honourable Member Mr McAllister *[Pause]*

Mr James K McAllister: Mde Chairperson, I am waiting for him to answer.

The Chairperson: Honourable Minister, are you going to answer the follow-up question? Are you aware of whatever?

Hon Dr Frank CS Anthony: As I said, I will provide the information as to who are the Principals for Prestige Motors Inc. The question was asked by the Honourable Member Mr Trotman and I will provide that information.

The Chairperson: Alright! The Honourable Member Mr McAllister

Mr James K McAllister: Mde Chairperson, could the Honourable Minister say what is the process intended to be use for the resale of the vehicles and if it is true that selected persons have already paid down for these vehicles?

The Chairperson: The Honourable Minister of Culture, Youth and Sport

Hon Dr Frank C.S. Anthony: Again, I am not aware that any person has paid for these vehicles and we have put out public notice, so anybody who wants to buy them, there will be a public notice.

The Chairperson: The Honourable Member, Mr McAllister

Mr James K Mc Allister: Mde Chairperson, a public notice is one thing; a process or a clear process and procedure is another. I am trying to find out from the Minister what is the process, is it competitive bidding; is it selective tendering; is it underhand dealing; what is the nature of the thing?

The Chairperson: Honourable Minister, do you want to answer that final question on the thing?

Hon Dr Frank CS Anthony: What I want to assure the Member is that we will have a transparent process and if he is desirous of having one of the vehicles, I am sure he will have equal opportunity in so doing.

The Chairperson: Thank you Mr Minister.

Division 541 - Ministry of Culture, Youth and Sport - Subhead 24001 - Land and Transport - \$168,834,000 - agreed to and ordered to stand part of the Estimates.

We will now move to the next item

ITEM 6 - DIVISION 548 - MINISTRY OF PUBLIC WORKS AND COMMUNICATIONS - Bridges/Roads - Subhead 16004

Question is proposed that the sum of \$16,856,200 for Division 548 - Ministry of Public Works and Communications - Bridges/Roads - Subhead 16004 - Conveyor Belt - stands part of the Estimates.

Mr Winston S. Murray: Mde Chairperson, could the Honourable Minister kindly say whether this is a conveyor belt intended to replace the existing belt or is it an additional Belt which will be to the greater good of the travelling public?

The Chairperson: The Honourable Minister of Transport and Hydraulics

Hon BH Robeson Benn: Mde Chairperson, this is a new belt intended to replace the one that is there at the moment and is also intended to take care of the higher volumes that we anticipate just now. The old belt will be kept in storage and will be used as necessary.

The Chairperson: The Honourable Member Mr Murray

Mr Winston S. Murray: Mde Chairperson, could the Honourable Minister say what is the age of the current conveyor belt, because my recollection is that it is relatively new and whether it may not have been better to give consideration to supplementing it with an additional belt, rather than scrapping it and putting a larger one. These are fair questions Mde Chairperson. I do not understand what the un-ease is about.

The Chairperson: The Honourable Minister of Transport and Hydraulics

Hon BH Robeson Benn: Thank you Mde Chairperson, the selection of a new belt was done by engineering methods; the current belt is at the point of repetitive failures and unpredictable failures; it has been deemed that it can only be stored and used in a back-up mode and given the fact that we have a situation where we will have a large amount of passenger traffic with baggage moving through the Air Port in a short period of time just now, a completely new belt was necessary.

The Chairperson: The Honourable Member Mr Murray

Mr Winston S. Murray: Mde Chairperson could the Honourable Minister say how much larger is this belt; is it fifty percent more capacity and if it is, would it be at the expense of an encroachment on the public area that currently exist, or will it be an expansion of the

existing physical structure to accommodate a larger belt?

The Chairperson: The Honourable Minister of Transport and hydraulics

Hon BH Robeson Benn: Thank you, Mde Chairperson, the intention is indeed to enlarge the area where the belt will be installed in addition to the passenger reception area too.

The Chairperson: Honourable Members, this completes consideration of all the items.

Question -

That the Committee of Supply approves of the proposal set out on Financial Paper No5/2006 Supplementary Provision on the Current and Capital Estimates totalling \$1,721,362,439 for the period 2006-11-18 to 2006-12-31

put and agreed to.

Assembly Resumed

Hon. Jennifer I Webster: Mde Speaker, I have to report to the Assembly that the Committee of Supply have approved of the proposal set out in Financial Paper No.5/2006, and I now move that the Assembly doth agree with the Committee's Resolution

Question put and agreed to.

Motion carried

**2. CONSIDERATION OF FINANCIAL
PAPER NO. 6/2006**

BE IT RESOLVED:

That this Assembly approve of the proposals set out in Financial Paper No 6/2006 - Supplementary Estimates (Capital) totalling \$999,893, 230 for the period ending 2006-12-31

Assembly in Committee of Supply

Hon Jennifer I Webster: Mde Chairperson, in accordance with Article 171 (2) of the Constitution, I signify that Cabinet has recommended for consideration by the National Assembly, the Motion for approval of the proposals set out in Financial Paper No. 6/2006 Supplementary Provisions (Capital)

totalling \$999,873,230., for the period ending 2006-12-31 and I now move the Motion.

Question proposed

The Chairperson: We will consider the Paper as usual. Honourable Minister, this is only Capital Expenditure.

ITEM 1 - DIVISION 516 - MINISTRY OF HEALTH - Subhead 4404

Question is proposed that the sum of \$40,027,413 for Division 516 - Ministry of Health - Subhead 4404 - Health Sector Programme - stands part of the Estimates

Division 516, Ministry of Health - Subhead 4404 - Health Sector Programme - \$40,027,413 - agreed to and ordered to stand part of the Estimates.

ITEM 2 - DIVISION 526 - MINISTRY OF FINANCE - Subhead 13001

Question is proposed that the sum of \$565,631,458 for Division 526 - Ministry of Finance - Subhead 13001 -

Drainage and Irrigation Support Project - stands part of the Estimates

Division 526, Ministry of Finance - Subhead 13001 - Drainage and Irrigation Support Project - \$565,631,458 - agreed to and ordered to stand part of the Estimates.

ITEM 3 - DIVISION 527 - MINISTRY OF LOCAL GOVERNMENT AND REGIONAL DEVELOPMENT - Subhead 19002

Question is proposed that the sum of \$156,000,000 for Division 527 - Ministry of Local Government and Regional Development- Subhead 19002 - Community Enhancement Service Programme - stands part of the Estimates

Division 527, Ministry of Local Government and Regional Development - Subhead 19002 - Community Enhancement Service Programme - \$156,000,000 - agreed to and ordered to stand part of the Estimates.

ITEM 3 - DIVISION 527 - MINISTRY OF LOCAL GOVERNMENT AND REGIONAL DEVELOPMENT - Subhead 19003

Question is proposed that the sum of \$74,683,291 for Division 527 - Ministry of Local Government and Regional Development - Subhead 19003 - Urban Development Programme - stands part of the Estimates'

Division 527, Ministry of Local Government and Regional Development - Subhead 19003 - Urban Development Programme - \$74,683,291 - agreed to and ordered to stand part of the Estimates.

ITEM 4 - DIVISION 546 - MINISTRY OF LABOUR, HUMAN SERVICES AND SOCIAL SECURITY - Subhead 19003

Question is proposed that the sum of \$71,826,068 for Division 546 - Ministry of Labour, Human Services and Social Security - Subhead 19003 - SIMAP-Phase III - stands part of the Estimates

Division 546, Ministry of Labour, Human Services and Social Security - Subhead 19003 - SIMAP-Phase III - \$71,826,068 - agreed to and ordered to stand part of the Estimates.

ITEM 5 - DIVISION 548 - MINISTRY OF PUBLIC WORKS AND COMMUNICATIONS, Bridges/Roads - Subhead 12006

Question is proposed that the sum of \$91,705,000 for Division 548 - Ministry of Public Works and Communications, Bridges/Roads - Subhead 12006 - NA/Moleson Creek Road - stands part of the Estimates

The Honourable Member Mr James McAllister

Mr James K McAllister: Mde. Chairperson, could the Honourable Minister say if the project New Amsterdam/Moleson Creek Road is being executed in its entirety or if it is being divided into two separate projects

The Chairperson: The Hon Minister of Transport and Hydraulics

Hon BH Robeson Benn: Mde Chairperson, the New Amsterdam/Moleson Creek

Road Project is divided into two lots:

- *Lot 1 has been awarded to Dipcon, and works has started.*

- *Lot 2 is being considered with respect to identifying the contractor*

Mr James K McAllister: Mde Chairperson could the Honourable Minister say, if it is true that tenders were received for Lot 2, and that the preferred contractor was identified and if so, why the Government did not proceed with the contract?

The Chairperson: The Honourable Minister of Transport and Hydraulics

Hon BH Robeson Benn: Mde Chairperson, it is indeed true that it was tendered and contractors were ranked, the top most ranked contractor has been in discussion with the Government and certain issues with regard to the over-all expenses related to the project are being looked at.

Division 548 - Ministry of Public Works and Communications - Bridges/Roads - Subhead 12006 - NA/Moleson Creek Road - \$91,705,000 - agreed to and ordered to stand part of the Estimates.

The Chairperson: Honourable Members, this completes the consideration of all the items.

Question -

That the Committee of Supply approve of the proposals set out in Financial Paper No 6/2006, Schedule of Supplementary Provision on the Current and Capital Estimates totalling \$999,873,230 for the period ended 2006-12-31

Put and agreed to

Assembly resumed

The Hon Minister in the Ministry of Finance

Hon Jennifer I Webster: Mde Speaker, I have to report to the Assembly that the Committee of Supply has considered Financial Paper No. 6/2006 and passed it without amendment. I now move the this Assembly doth agree with the Committee's Resolution.

Question put and agreed to

Motion carried

Suspension of Standing Orders Nos. 13 and 54

Hon Clement J Rohee: Mde Speaker, I wish to move that Standing Order No. 54. 1(a) is suspended to enable the Assembly to proceed at this sitting today Friday 19 January 2007 with the Second reading of the remaining stages of the Value Added Tax Amendment Bill 2007, Bill No. 3

Mr Winston S Murray: Mde Speaker, I am really at a lost here

The Acting Speaker: I think we are on the Appropriation Bill

The Honourable Minister of Home Affairs

Hon Clement J Rohee: Mde Speaker with your leave, I would like to move that Standing Order Nos.13 and 54 be suspended to enable Supplementary

Appropriation (No.3 for 2006) - Bill No. 2 of 2007 to be introduced at this stage.

Question put and agreed to

Motion carried

BILL - FIRST, SECOND AND THIRD READINGS

**3. SUPPLEMENTARY APPROPRIATION
(NO. 3 FOR 2006) BILL 2007 - Bill No.
2/2007**

A Bill intituled, an Act to provide for the issue from the Consolidated Fund of the sums necessary to meet the expenditure (not otherwise lawfully charged on the Consolidated Fund) of Guyana for the fiscal year ending 31st December 2006, estimates whereof have been approved by the National Assembly, and for the appropriation of those sums for the specified purposes, in conformity with the Constitution.

The Acting Speaker: The Honourable Minister in the Ministry of Finance

Hon Jennifer I Webster: Mde Speaker, in accordance with Paragraph (2) of Article 171 of the Constitution, I signified that Cabinet has recommended for the Supplementary Appropriation (No. 3/2006) Bill - Bill No. 2 of 2007 for consideration by the National Assembly and I now present the Bill to the Assembly and move that it be read for the first time.

Question put and agreed to

Bill read a First time.

The Acting Speaker: The Honourable Minister in the Ministry of Finance

Hon Jennifer I Webster: I move that the Bill be read for a Second time

Question put and agreed to

Bill read a Second Time

The Acting Speaker: The Honourable Minister in the Ministry of Finance

Hon Jennifer I Webster: I move that the Supplementary Appropriation (No. 3/2006) Bill - Bill No 2/2007 be read for a Third time and passed as printed.

(Cont'd in Part 2, Page 81)

National Assembly Debates

8th Sitting

14:00h

Friday, 19 January 2007

Part 2 of 3

The Acting Speaker: Question is that Supplementary Appropriation No 3/2006 Bill No. 2/2007 be read for the third time and passed as printed?

Question put and agreed to

Bill read a third time and passed as printed

SUSPENSION OF STANDING ORDER 54 (1) A

The Acting Speaker: Honourable Members, the Value-Added Tax (Amendment) Bill, which was laid before the House this afternoon, the Government is seeking to move this Bill through all its stages today.

The Honourable Minister of Home Affairs

Hon Clement J Rohee: Mde Speaker, I wish to move that Standing Order 54 (1) A be suspended to enable the Assembly to proceed at this sitting today Friday, 19 January 2007, with the Second reading of the remaining stages of the Value-Added Tax (Amendment) Bill 2007 - Bill No 3/2007

Motion proposed.

The Acting Speaker: The Honourable Member Mr Murray

Mr Winston S. Murray: Mde Speaker, I have a grave concern about the procedure that is being requested here this afternoon by the Honourable Minister of Home Affairs. In fact, I had a conversation with the substantive Honourable Minister of Finance yesterday evening and it was my understanding from the Clerk this morning with whom I checked that this Bill would simply be read for the first time and be deferred for consideration to a subsequent sitting and that is why there is nothing on the Supplementary Order Paper that do not give any intimation whatever, not of the slightest iota, that suggest that the Government has an intension of taking the Bill through all its stages. [*Interruption: 'Urgent matter!'*] Mde Speaker, through you, I would like the Honourable Member to understand, that we work from an Order Paper and it is not from the whim and fancy of any Member for him to get up and introduce a pattern in the National Assembly. And I wish to state categorically in that regard, that there is no place in the Supplementary Order Paper today, which suggests the taking of the Value-Added Tax (Amendment) Bill through all its stages today.

Mde Speaker, another matter arises in this regard; we are given until 11.00.am by a dictat from the Speaker to submit - Announcements by the Speaker - Amendments -and we have until 10.00 am in fact, to submit Amendments in respect of Bills tabled in this House. We come this afternoon at 2.00 pm to find this Bill being proposed by the Government and to find

simultaneously a request by the Acting Leader of the House, because I assume that is his position today – a request that this Bill be taken through all its stages, without us having an opportunity in accordance with the Speaker's directive to submit Amendments. We are being denied this right by this rushed procedure being suggested. It is not right, it is not provided for in the Order Paper and it is highly improper in my respectful view for the Honourable Member or the Government to seek to ram down the throats of this National Assembly the taking of all the stages of this Value-Added Tax (Amendment) Bill this afternoon, and we vehemently object to this kind of domineering and dominating attitude in this National Assembly.
[Applause]

Mde Speaker further, I see among the papers before us this afternoon, a Motion. I do not know what the status of this Motion is; it is not on our Order Paper, is this a Motion for consideration at some subsequent date? There is no intimation or is it for consideration this afternoon? Because if it is for consideration this afternoon, I would have thought that they were trying to find a mechanism to deal with VAT Amendment, before the expiration of seven clear days which is inherent in the Law, under the Interpretation and General Clauses Act, and I thought they were seeking today to abridge that time so that we could have back some time subsequent today, and that would have been, although unacceptable, because of the rushed Bill, at least an understandable and less objectionable procedure, because it would have allowed some time, even though not the full seven days. But any

reasonable thinking Parliamentarian, who has the interest of transparency in this House, which I assume all of us have, should be concerned that it is possible for this kind of situation to arise. And Mde Speaker, I hope I can persuade you to rule that such in-procedure should not be tolerated in this manner in which the attempt is being made at this time today. Thank you very much. *[Applause]*

The Acting Speaker: The Honourable Member Mr Trotman

Mr Raphael GC Trotman: Mde Chairperson, I rise to add to Mr Murray's arguments, in saying that whilst we believe that issues of VAT are indeed urgent and important, the manner in which this Bill is being sought and introduced and debated in all its stages, flies in the face of established Standing Orders and if one were to read Order No. 54, it says that a motion and a question may be put for the Bill to be debated at an earlier date. It does not say immediately on the date of it being laid before the House.

Further, Standing Orders Nos. 55 and 56, speak about the Bill being Gaxetted. Mde Speaker, we cannot today lay this Bill here, it has not been Gazetted and try to proceed with it. And by the very fact, that the Honourable Member has put before this House a Motion for the Amendment of Standing Order 54, is an acceptance on his part, that he knows that the procedure says that what he is attempting to do, he cannot and should not be allowed to do. The Standing Order also said that when one seeks to amend the Standing Order, he or she may propose a motion and

that matter as proposed goes immediately to the Standing Order Committee to be considered by that Committee, and returned to this House for a decision.

So Mde Speaker, I fail to see how by any stretch of the Law or imagination, we can proceed with the Second reading of this Bill this afternoon, without it being Gazetted, without time being allow for its study and without the Laws of Standing Order provided and I trust that the Honourable Member will do the right and proper thing and withdraw his application. Thank you.
[Applause]

The Acting Speaker: Honourable Members, I take the point that you have made in the Opposition benches, but I am guided by the Clerk that this Bill was in fact gazetted, perhaps the Clerk could give us some other information

I call your attention to and also my attention is drawn to Standing Order No. 53 *Introduction and First Reading of Government Bills*

It says here:

- (1) *Except and provided in paragraph (3) of this Standing Order, any Member may move for leave to introduce a Bill of which he or she is given notice, but a Bill maybe presented to the Assembly on behalf of the Government after notice without*

an Order of the Assembly for its introduction.

And it goes on to say:

- (3) *Except on the recommendation of consent of Cabinet signified a Minister, the Assembly shall not proceed upon any Bill, (including an Amendment to a Bill which, in the opinion of the person presiding, makes provision for any of the following for the purposes -*
- (a) *for imposing any tax;*
 - (b) *for imposing any change upon the Consolidated Fund or any other public fund of Guyana or for altering any such charge otherwise than by reducing it.*

Honourable Members, I think I will reserve my ruling on this aspect of the matter, until the House resumes after the tea break, because I need to consider this matter some more - consider the purport of Standing Order No..53. So I will reserve my ruling on this matter.

[Ruling Reserved to a later stage of the Sitting]

NA 19 JANUARY 2007

We can now proceed with the next item on the Order Paper.

There again the Order Paper has the Gambling Prevention (Amendment) Bill 2006 - Bill No. 30/2006. Again, the Government has asked for the position to be slightly reversed. We will deal with the Pesticides and Toxic Chemicals Control (Amendment) Bill 2007 ahead of the Gambling (Amendment) Bill. So we will now proceed with Item 4 on the Order Paper

BILLS - Second Readings

**4. PESTICIDES AND TOXIC
CHEMICALS CONTROL
(AMENDMENT) BILL 2007 - Bill No.
1/2007 published on
2007-01-05**

*A Bill intituled, an Act to
amend the Pesticides and
Toxic Chemicals Control Act
2000*

The Honourable Minister of Agriculture

Mrs Deborah J Backer: Mde Chairperson, I rise on a Point of Order ...

The Acting Speaker: Yes, Honourable Member

Mrs Deborah J Backer: Thank you very much ... being that my reading and I will be grateful for a ruling on Order 24 of our new Standing Orders, which I understand Standing Order 24.(3) is what the Government is seeking to use to change the order of the Order Paper, that that Order does not give the Government the power or the right to change the way that the Order Paper is set for any day's sitting and I will be grateful for a ruling on that issue. *[Pause]*

The Acting Speaker: Honourable Members, I do not want to go the way of reserving any ruling again, because we still have some time before the tea-break. But this is public business and although I take the point made by the Honourable Member Mrs Backer that Order No.24 – *Arrangement of Public Business*, which the is government bringing the Bill; Order No. 24 (3) says:

The Government Business shall consist of Motions proposed to be made and Bills sponsored by Minister or Parliamentary Secretaries and shall be set down in such order as the Government think fit.

And I think that is in fact why we have an Order Paper, Honourable Minister, I think there have been a lot of variations, I wonder if they are trying to take advantage of my sitting here, *[Applause]* because it is in fact on a proper reading of the Standing Order No. 24 (3) it says: ...*shall be set down in such order as the*

Government think fit, and setting down to my mind, If I were to rule...setting down means ordering on the Order Paper.

However, here again, I am advised by the Clerk, that there have been several occasions where we have traditionally been reversing the order of things on the Order Paper, and so I will not necessarily make any ruling adverse to the Government on this issue. But I would like to advise the Government that they should properly get an order in their papers and do not come trying to reverse orders and making a mess of the Order Papers that they themselves have set down here. So, I will go along. Also because Honourable Members, I think that the Pesticides Bill would be a much smaller Bill in terms of the number of speakers we will have, so for that other reason I will allow this one to proceed.

The Honourable Minister of Agriculture, you may go ahead.

Hon Robert M Persaud: Mde Speaker, I intend to make the life of the National Assembly on this particular Bill easier and I wish to withdraw a Bill intituled, an Act to Amend the Pesticides and Toxic Chemicals Control (Amendment) Bill 2007 – Bill No.1/2007 published on 2007-01-05 for further consideration and to be re-submitted at the next sitting of the National Assembly.

The Acting Speaker: Thank you Mr Minister.

[Bill Withdrawn]

We will now move to Item 3 on the Order Paper.

**3. GAMBLING PREVENTION
(AMENDMENT) BILL 2006 -**

Bill No. 30/2006 published on 2006-12-28

*A Bill intituled, an Act to
amend the Pesticides and
Toxic Chemicals Control Act
2000*

The Honourable Minister of Home Affairs

Hon Mr Clement J Rohee: Mde Speaker, last week when we debated the Motion in the name of the Honourable Member Mrs Sheila Holder, there was quite an extensive debate on the issue of Casino Gambling. I believe that the debate on that Motion was a precursor for the Debate on the Gambling Prevention (Amendment) Bill 2006. And what that

Debate has done, I believe, if I may respectfully say so, it has put this House in good stead and given it a sense of awareness, I would say, deeper awareness and appreciation of the complexities and the experiences of other countries in respect of Casino Gambling.

When I spoke on that occasion, I made clear reference to the Constitution of our country and again I would wish to posit or to situate this Bill within that framework and to proceed from there on.

I make specific reference to this section of the Preamble of our Constitution, because I believe that in the public domain, many views have been expressed on this matter - views/views against and what that has shown once again, in Guyana like in many other countries that public opinion or I should put it the other way around, that Gambling certainly retains the capacity to divide public opinion. Be that as it may, because those who argue for Casino Gambling and to some extent those who argue against Casino gambling, they find common ground on certain elements of this issue, which I believe is reflected in our Constitution.

I refer to this particular paragraph in our Preamble because I believe it tells the whole story if read very carefully, because apart from the moral issues that arise from the matter that is before us, the economic, social and financial implications are of equal importance. The Constitution in its Preamble says:

We Guyanese people proclaim.

This Constitution in order to create a republican community practically aware that the finances,

industry, communications, education, business and technology of the world

are global factors affecting all, in which all must engage and from which all must benefit. This cause without repeating myself, is all embracing and I think captures the sense of the akie of the arguments raised in favour of Casino Gambling.

Mde Speaker, in South Africa a Debate arose on the question of Casino Gambling after the Apartheid regime collapsed and the ANC regime led by Nelson Mandela the first democratic elected President of South Africa and I think it is important to note this, because some people tend to raise an ideological consideration on this subject.

In South Africa, this question also generated country-wide debate, not so much in relation to Casino Gambling at the national level, but Casino Gambling at the regional level. And we have, if I may say so, en passant an element of regional Casino Gambling in the Bill that is currently before this Honourable House.

Mde. Speaker, in a Report that was commissioned by the Government of South Africa called the Howard Commission, having examined the issue exhaustively and having published their Report, had the following to say:

Gambling is an inherent feature of human nature. Gambling is being legalised globally, because of the liberalising attitude, changes and increasing leisure time. It is now a very

wide-spread activity, constituting a very popular past-time.

That was the Report of the Howard Commission - a section or an excerpt from the Report of the Howard Commission published in South Africa

I make reference to this Mde Speaker, because it is important for us to recognise that what we are seeking to grapple with here by virtue of this Bill, must not only take into consideration our national peculiarities, but international experiences as well.

Mde Speaker, I recently received from a friend of mine a book entitled **GAMBLING - A Story of Triumph and Disaster** written by Mike Atherton. I refer to the preface of this Book which says the following:

To gamble a verb not found in English usage until 1775, but taught to derive from the Anglo Saxon word 'gamin' meaning 'sport, pleasure, joy or past-time', implies a positive choice to seek out risk in return or reward. This apparent desire to surrender to the forces of chance regularly afflicts more than two-thirds of the adult population in Britain if the statistics from the national lottery are to be believed. In other words, two-thirds of the population in the United Kingdom are engaged in this sport, pleasure, joy or past-time.

Mde Speaker, the question that is before us was also debated in the United Kingdom and I would like again

to quote from the Hansard of the House of Commons debates on Thursday, 7 December 2006. In the course of this debate, the records in the House of Commons library, showed that gambling is not something that can be regulated out of existence whatever its dangers. Traditionally, gambling regulations was based on the physical purposes in which gambling took place. The internet has made such regulation impractical in the face of such hard facts, the best course of action for Britain is to permit - they have gone beyond what we are talking about which is Casino Gambling to internet gambling, to permit on-line gambling from British based websites in the knowledge that such gambling can be subject to British regulations and will offer security to British punters that will discourage them from trusting their luck and money to overseas operators. The emphasis [*Interruption*]

The Speaker: Honourable Member Mr Rohee, hold that talk after the quotation.

Honourable Members, this is a good time to take the suspension

16:00H - SUSPENSION OF SITTING

16:47H - RESUMPTION OF SITTING

SUSPENSION OF STANDING ORDER NO. 54 (1)
(a)

The Acting Speaker: Honourable Members, I did say earlier concerning the Motion to suspend the Standing Order No. 54 (1) (a) and believe also No.13 to have the Value-Added (Amendment) Bill go through in all its stages and all its readings this afternoon. I did say that I am going to give my ruling after the break, but I now so do.

I call Members attention to Standing Order No.111, Suspension of Standing Order; I shall read it for the benefit of all Members:

Any one or more of these Standing Orders may after notice or with relieve of the Speaker, be suspended on a Motion made by a Member at any sitting.

Honourable Members, particularly the Honourable Minister of Home Affairs has asked for Standing Order No 54 (1) (a) to be suspended to enable this Assembly to go through all the stages of this Bill. But I find, Honourable Members, that no notice has been given, this is something that has just been sprung on the House; a Supplementary Order Paper was laid with just the first reading of the Bill stipulated and I know that we have had several situations where, if the Government had so desired, they would have continued at least on the Supplementary Order Paper and proceed to ask for the Amendment of the Standing Order thereon.

As the position stands, the Honourable Minister's matter has just sprung on the House; it is not even on

the Supplementary Order Paper, which would in some form or the other constitutes notice. I understand, the notice from Senior Clerk has to be signed and all of that, but even if this matter was on the Supplementary Order Paper, I would have mindful to give my permission to the Government to go through with the stages of this Bill, but with no notice being given, the alternative to that is that I have to give leave to do it and I am mindful not to do so. So Honourable Minister of Home Affairs, I am not giving leave for this Bill to go through all its stages to-day.

In addition to that, I have a long list here - a combine list of speakers on the Gambling Bill numbering 30 and I think we have a long way ahead of us.

In addition to that, also do not like the Government stating on their Order Paper one thing, I mean already earlier the Pesticides Bill had preceded the Gambling Bill and then we heard it being withdrawn and all of that. So at this stage, we will proceed with the reading, of the Gambling Bill.

Assembly resumed the Debate on the Gambling Prevention (Amendment) Bill 2006 - Bill No. 30/2006

The Honourable Minister of Home Affairs

Hon Clement J Rohee: Mde Speaker, while I respect your ruling, I have to say that I am disappointed given the urgency and importance of the issue that the Motion sought to bring before this Honourable House. I think we all recognise, not only we here in this Honourable House, but those outside; people of Guyana have a sense of urgency of this matter and we will, at the appropriate time provide what we consider to be the substance with respect to the Bill.

Mde Speaker, I was referring in my preliminary remarks about the experiences in the United Kingdom, where two issues have arisen, one dealing with regional casinos and the other with internet gaming. Now the debate on this issue, like any other issue or in any other country, would be predictable about gambling in general irrespective of the forms it would take. But those countries where Casino Gaming is now flourishing clearly this is happening precisely because it has been accepted as a legitimate activity, provided it is conducted under appropriate conditions and in the case of the United Kingdom, those conditions would include treatment for addictive behaviour.

Mde Speaker there are two aspects to this issue:

- (i) the philosophical; and
- (ii) the more practical.

With respect to the philosophical, the response to that could either be a yes or a no. The two issues when looked at together philosophical and practical, I would want to suggest that the answer be a yes. However, if the answer is yes naturally there is a case for building in to that positive response the usual notions of

freedom, choice and the undesirability of allowing sectional, moral or religious considerations to dominate decision making. Now every group, whether they are for or against must be allowed to put their views or to press their views, but in the final analysis, it is the Government that has to hold the balance and to decide in the interest of the country, and this is not only in relation to Casino but in all matters, I submit Mde Speaker, where there is differing perspectives.

Mde Speaker, I think it is important at this point that I make reference, because a hue and cry has been created or has been made that in terms of equality and discrimination *vis-à-vis* legislation that the Bill that is before us impinges on these basic tenants of life and practice.

The record of the PPP/Civic Administration with respect to legislation, treating with equality and anti-discrimination, I think speaks volumes and I would like to refer to some pieces of legislation that addresses the record of the administration irrespective of equality and anti-discrimination. Because clearly, this is not the direction we would like the debate on this issue to go, that is to say, that people do not have a choice; people do not have equal rights to make their views known and people do not have rights in terms of deciding whether they should go or not in an activity of any sort with respect to gaming.

A person has that right now in our society in respect to lotteries to decide whether they would wish to play lottery or not, that right already exist and in terms of the equality of the citizens, they are all equal in the

sense that they have the right to decide yes to play or not to play. But lest this issue be misunderstood, I would wish to emphasize that the Bill that we have before us is discriminatory by its very nature, because it says very explicitly, that unless you are a registered guest at the hotel, where the casino is located - paying guest - at the hotel where the casino is located, you will be restricted in terms of access. And in addition to that we have another saving aspect of this Bill, which speaks to the question of the gaming authority, who will exercise full authority with respect to the regulations on this matter.

Mde Speaker, when you look at the track record of the administration, I emphasize this point, because I want to lay and make it very, very clear that even in respect of the Bill that is before us - the Gambling Prevention (Amendment) Bill - this will proceed in the same way as the Government has proceeded, in respect of previous pieces of legislation:

- Registration of Landlord Act;
- The Environmental Protection Act;
- Domestic Violence Act;
- The Abduction of Children Act;
- The Maintenance (Amendment) Act;
- Prevention of Discrimination Act;
- The Employment of Young Persons and Children (Amendment) Act;

- Combating of Trafficking in Persons Act;
- The Amerindian Act;
- Competition and Trade Fairing Act; and
- The Consumer Protection Act.

These are good and excellent examples to show how, notwithstanding the differences of opinion, whether in the public domain or within Parliament, the fact that in the final analysis these pieces of legislation were able to accommodate and to eventually lay bare that all citizens of Guyana are equal and are not subject to any form of discrimination in respect to these legislations. *[Interruption: 'This Bill is discriminatory']* I will deal with that

Mde Speaker, in this country, there is no national morality and morality cannot be legislated and we believe that we cannot subject State and Government policy to the tyranny of morality. Mde Speaker, this is a question of freedom verses protection. On the one hand, it is the role of the administration to allow freedom, but at the same time, it is the role of the administration to protect those who would not wish to engage in a practice of this type by ensuring that an authority such as the gaming authority is in place to protect those who would not wish or who, even if they participate in this would be subjected to certain difficulties.

The question that we therefore have to ask is, does the country have the capacity to minimise the negative

aspect of casino gambling? This is the key question, do we have the capacity to minimise the negative impact of casino gambling? And here again, we have to return to what the Bill says explicitly. No one is going to be allowed to walk off the streets of Georgetown or the East Bank or where ever the hotels with the casinos will be located and go straight to a casino. The legislation does not say this. Most of the persons who will be participating or gaming at these Casinos would be people who would either be guest or people from outside the country.

And the question was asked whether casino gambling appears in our strategic plan or whether it appears in our manifesto. I think it is clear for every one to recognise that in any strategic plan or in any manifesto, nothing is spelt out in great detail like a Constitution, as to what the administration will be doing.

Mde Speaker, I believe that given the argument that have arisen in respect to casino gambling in the public domain and within this Honourable House, if we are casting around for someone or something or somewhere to place the blame with respect to the ills that will arise from casino gambling, I would respectfully submit that we do not blame it on casino gambling as such, we have to blame it on the free market economy. And I wish to elaborate by saying that just as we work to put in place social safety nets events to address social and economic difficulties that arise from within the economies of this nature, it behoves us to ensure that we put in place tough regulations under the Gaming Authority to ensure that

society is protected properly and that there is no degree of exploitation, fraud, we heard things like money laundering and any of the detriments that will cause harm and interfere with the objectives of the policy.

I was therefore surprised to read in the Stabroek News of the 19 January 2007, a statement purported to be made by the Honourable Leader of the Opposition where in addition to claiming that casino gambling will encourage money laundering and a slew of other ills. A new dimension has been added to this where we are told and I quote:

Casino gambling would provide a lovely smoke screen for the drug lords, who have been engaged in extra-judicial killings promoted by phantom squads among other things.

Mde Speaker, I think we have to have some limit to which we go with respect to allowing our imagination to run wild. We have mentioned so many ills associated with casino gambling. We are told that -

- it would facilitate money laundering - the growth of the under-world;
- it would result in the criminalisation of the economy;
- it will result in a degeneration of Guyana into a state of lawlessness.

Now, added to that, we are saying that it is a creation of a smoke-screen for extra-judicial killings. It is like the question asked by Napoleon: How many leagues

do we go? How much further do we go, in stretching our imagination as to what casino gambling will lead to?

Mde Speaker, there are so many countries and democracies around the world, Scandinavia, Latin America, North America, where these industries and I assume that other speakers from this side of the House will provide the Honourable House with some very convincing statistics to show the extent to which casino gambling has contributed to the GDP or GNP of these countries and if these countries who are developed industrialised countries as the United Kingdom is seeking to do make themselves the haven for internet gambling, I simply ask the question in all sincerity: Why would a developing country like Guyana not want to take advantage to diversify its tourism sector and dynamise its economy? As I said before in this Honourable House, I have heard speakers from the other side of the House claiming that we are living in the past, that we do not seem to be supportive of the free-market economy and we are still bound by certain ideological constrains and yet when we seek to proceed in this direction, we are being told, hold on boys, you all are going in the wrong direction.

Mde Speaker, we have plans to put in place, measures to address most of the concerns that have been raised by the Honourable Members in a previous debate and I would not wish to repeat those, I think they will come up in the course of the debate having regard to the fact that you yourself mentioned the number of speakers that you have on your list and I would not wish to pre-empt in any way those contributions and what would

be said in the course of those contributions. Save and except that the Bill before us is very clear, that we on this side of the House, are seeking by way of this Bill to establish an industry nascent as it might be, as innovative as it might be in the Guyana context, since we have never had, we are breaking new ground; and because we are breaking this new ground; there are people who are raising all kind of red flags advising us that this is not the way to go.

Mde Speaker, I refer again to this interesting book that I have, which has the pros and cons of gambling. It says:

If the history of gambling in Britain and elsewhere tells us any thing, it is that there will always be a portion of society who wants to gamble and who regardless of the regulations of the time or the risk, will find the means that the wherewithal to do so; where there is a will, there will always be a way.

Mde. Speaker, I would not wish to continue much more on this matter, save and except to say that what the Government will be seeking to do in terms of the Gaming Authority is to ensure that there is integrity and best practices that are in place in respect of casino gambling. Doubts have been expressed about the track record of the administration in respect to regulations. I am not so sure whether that is just thought or whether that is factual, but irrespective of whether it is talk or factual, the point is that the reality is that casino gambling is coming to Guyana and inexorably so.

This has nothing to do, as the Honourable Member as I have just heard him mumbling saying that this is because we have a majority. It has nothing to do with *majoritarianism*; it has nothing to do with that. I have taken pains to explain that what we are seeing here in this debate is a microcosm of the debate that has taken place in the wider society and in the history of gambling has shown that inevitably such a debate will take place, but in the final analysis, a decision has to be taken one way or the other and it behoves the Government of the day. Government cannot be flip-flopping on matters of national interest; Government cannot be seen to be flip-flopping on matters that are of extreme importance from an economic point of view and from an investment point of view that will bring in our view, tremendous social and economic benefits to Guyana. And notwithstanding the fears that have been expressed, what we have to do is to work to ensure that we address those concerns not to throw out the baby with the bath water. As I said, when the Hoyte administration was seeking to introduce IMF medicine for Guyana and with the structural adjustment programme, it was recognised since then that would be bitter medicine for Guyana, and that is why for example, social safety nets such as SIMAP was introduced, because it was recognised then in that kind of situation, so you need to put in place social safety nets and in the same way as we agree that social safety nets must be put in place to deal or to address any social or economic dislocation, I would respectfully suggest that if we have fears about what will emerge whether is perception real or imagine, let us work to ensure that we address those issues.

The question was raised about money laundering. We know as a matter of fact that we have Anti-money Laundering and Countering the Financing of Terrorism Bill that is coming before this Honourable House soon. And under the draft legislation, casinos will be one of the reporting entities, any one of the areas that are being raised as areas of concerns by those outside this Honourable House or inside this Honourable House; there is legislation already in place to address those matters. Therefore I wish to reiterate that the issue at hand here is not to throw out casino gambling as a matter of entertainment; as a matter of an investment; as a matter of ensuring that people get more jobs; it has been proven to be so internationally.

Mde Speaker, there was a view that we were rushing - that there was a rush - to put in place casino gambling, if that is true, one can recall some years ago, when a certain restaurateur or entrepreneur sought to install certain gaming machines and he was not allowed to do so. Now if we were rushing to do this, how do you explain that antecedent; how do you explain that? And I think there is someone on the other side of the House who will wish to explain that. There is also the view that there has been expressed that we are rushing to casino gambling because of Cricket World Cup. I have spoken on this matter, I believe others have spoken on this matter, there is no truth to that and I say no more.

Mde Speaker, I would like to conclude by saying that I understand that His Excellency the President met with the religious community this afternoon at their request - he held a meeting with the religious community this

afternoon at their request - and I further understand that this meeting concluded on a very good tone, that it was a very good meeting and that what emerged out of that meeting was a much better understanding of the direction and the approaches which the Government is going to take on this subject. The concerns have been taken into account. The concerns of the religious community have been taken into account and I say that without any fear or contradiction. Mde Speaker, we could have gone in the direction like some other countries, where you have slot machines installed at every street corner. Mde Speaker, if I may respectfully suggest, there are some, who are seeking to create the impression that this casino here is going to be something widespread, every Tom, Dick and Beharry is going to be able to engage in casino gambling, participate in it, that we are going to be having slot machines at every corner, somebody said Vreed-en-hoop stelling, some one said at Lethem, trying to ridicule the position, which is certainly not the case. It is not our intention and I think the point was well taken that it is not the intention to go in the direction in which some countries have gone in respect to casino gambling. And the Bill that is now before us is crafted in such a way, makes it very clear - pellucid - that it is not the intent of the administration to have casino gambling done in this ridiculous, irresponsible way, as it is being posited in certain quarters.

Mde Speaker, I rest by saying in the final analysis, let us not cast doubts or gain-say the importance and the significance of the authority that will be vested with the requisite regulations to ensure that whatever

transpires in these activities, is above board and does not bring harm to our country and our people. Thank you. *[Applause]*

The Acting Speaker: Thank you Honourable Minister

The Honourable Member Mr Corbin

Mr Robert HO Corbin: Almighty God, we, who are here gathered together, do most humbly beseech Thee to guide us in all our consultations, so that we may together build a land where knowledge is free, where the mind is without fear, and the head is held high, and where words come from the depth of truth.

Grant us O God, Thine aid and guidance, so that we may deal justly with the several causes that come before us, laying aside all private interests, prejudices and personal preferences, so that the result of our counsels may be to the glory of thy Blessed Name, the maintenance of true religion, the preservation of justice, the safety, honour and happiness of the President and the peace and prosperity of Guyana.

Mde Speaker, in keeping with the maintenance of true religion and so as not to offend my brothers and sisters of the Islamic Community, I need to remind them that every function that I have attended at their invitation, they begin in a particular way

Bismillah Oh Rahman Oh Rahim - I begin in the name of God most gracious, most merciful. And as I looked at an Ad in the Newspapers yesterday, I have been reminded by the Islamic Community of their book the Quran and it pointed me to Chapter 5, Verse 9, which I believe some members on both sides of this Honourable House must be very familiar with, but I have to do the checks and *Sura 5 Verse 90* - Oh you who believe intoxicants and gambling are an abomination of Satan's handy work, eschew such that you may prosper. I suspect this has to do with the nation as a whole that you as a people will prosper.

I begin this way in this debate this afternoon, because we are mandated as legislators in this House to deal with all matters which come before us without prejudice, clear conscious and in accordance with our views and our beliefs. I had hoped that this afternoon, when we were witnessing the First reading of this Bill, we would have witnessed an unmitigated apology by the Honourable Minister for his remarks in this House last week, when the religious communities of this country were castigated in the foulest manner and such grave disrespect shown to them by members of this House. At the last minute, I think Mr Lumumba was right when he wrote the paper today, he at the last moment sought to relieve the Government of such serious embarrassment at the end of the debate. So I must say to his credit, he attempted to save the day. So you were right in the paper [*Applause*] and so the paper was a little unfair to you I agree. But I believe that that did not redeem this administration for what I would not consider a *faux pas* it revealed the true

thinking of this Government and it helped to illustrate the manner in which we have had business of our country administered for some time.

Mde Speaker, let me at the outset say to this Honourable House and to the Minister, that from a personal position even without listening to all those arguments, I am opposed completely to the introduction of casino gambling in this country from purely religious principles [*Applause*] but even if I were not to be dogmatic, and I used logic and the very arguments he has sought to convince this House that the Government had no choice, I believe that he himself will be found wanting. I say this, having listened very carefully to the Minister of Home Affairs presentation to this House this afternoon and I must say it was robbed of its usual robust self and at one time I thought that we would have a transformation like Saul on the way to Damascus and that perhaps half-way having recognised all the ills that he himself sought to tell us about even before we tell him, about the evils and the ill-effects on the society of this phenomenon that the Government is about to introduce, he runs to the defence of them, we have not said anything yet, at least in this debate, but he has carefully anticipated them and I would have thought, that having regard to his own portfolio as Minister of Home Affairs, where only this afternoon in this House we have seen astronomical increases in the allocation for security over last year. When we are confronted with headlines every day, not only about the escape at Mazaruni, but all the crimes that are being committed daily and an admitted inability of the present

administration, to deal effectively with our present security situation that the Minister seeks to assure this House, that we must approve this legislation on the basis of the fact, that he has plans or he has some plans to avoid the evils which he knows will follow the introduction and implementation of this Casino Gambling Bill this afternoon.

The Minister also sought to locate his presentation in our supreme law, but I too, would like to locate my presentation, I have already located it first of all in the prayers which we all subscribe to at every sitting of this Parliament. So I have located it in the religious and moral context which we all subscribe to, but I locate it now in the Constitutional Framework which guides this country our supreme law and Article 9, Chapter 2 states very clearly that sovereignty belongs to the people, who exercise it through their representatives at the democratic organs established by and under this Constitution.

I understand that this National Institution - the Parliament - is supposed to give reality to the sovereignty of the people of this country through what we do here in this National Assembly.

As I looked at the Stabroek News, Thursday January 18, 2007, and I would like to quote for the records what this newspaper states, because I think it puts it succinctly rather than dealing with petitions already before this House and I quote Page 3:

The Bahai, Christian, Hindu and Muslim Communities, have issued a joint call to

the Government to withdraw the Gambling (Amendment) Bill, scheduled for debate and passage in Parliament tomorrow.. The statement was submitted by the Anjuman Hifazatul Islam. Central Islamic Organisation of Guyana ...

And forgive me if I do not use the correct pronunciation, I trust that when the Honourable Member Mr Nadir, a devout Muslim, I am told, who will no doubt stand up and represent his Islamic brothers in this debate, he will give some proper pronunciation to these words.

... But the Central Islamic Organisation of Guyana, (CIOG) , the Guyana Council of Churches, Guyana Hindu Dharma Sabha, Guyana Islamic Trust, (GIT), Bahai National Spiritual Assembly, Georgetown Ministers Fellowship, Guyana Evangelical Fellowship and the Guyana Islamic Relief Organisation, they are also calling on the leadership of each political party to allow their members of Parliament to vote according to their conscience and not according to the party line...

I can tell you that is so on this side, all Members over here are free to vote according to their conscience. There will be a conscience vote at lease on the People's National Congress Reform-One Guyana Members here. [Applause] The religious leaders also

want the members of the public to urgently encourage their MPs; I do not want to deal with that part.

I will go on further:

the religious communities joint statement was read to the media ...

So it is not a airy-fairy business, and it goes on further Mde Speaker to point out that this represents some ninety-five percent of the population of this country. Whether or not one accepts the religious basis, the spiritual basis or the moral basis upon which the religious community holds the view that like me Guyana should not introduce casino gambling. It is quite irrelevant to the second point I made about the obligations of the Members of this House to give sovereignty to the people of this country, by what we do in this Parliament and it is my submission to the Honourable Minister today, that if indeed he holds the oath of office that he took and that we all took when we entered this august chamber, then the only correct thing for the Government to do today is to withdraw the Bill completely [*Applause*] That will not remove of course the obligation placed on certain Members on that side, to apologise for their behaviour in this House.

Let me go a little further , to deal with, not the Constitution because it could be said that we constantly had violations of the Constitution and so sometimes it is possible that the Government disagrees with the Constitution, but they cannot amend it, that is why we have an Acting Chancellor up to now, that is

why we have an Integrity Commission appointed outside of the Constitution, and that is why we have the lottery funds, another gambling operation sending the precedent to criminalisation, because the laws are being flouted in relation to the monies which are being gained from the lottery fund. *[Applause]* That is the example we have of the major previous attempt to amend a law, which was intended to prevent gambling. So we are amending a law - it is not a new law to say, this is a law to permit gambling; this is a law which was intended by the original framers of our laws, recognising that this was not healthy for the nation, they decided to make a law to prevent gambling, but we are not bold enough to make a new law to say that gambling is okay. We are amending the law that is preventing gambling to permit gambling, and the first time we did it in this House by permitting lottery and we have seen, and the Minister was saying that there was no more criminalisation. The very introduction of lottery has given scope for the executive to breach the laws of payment of monies into the Consolidated Fund and we have that example being set at the highest level *[Applause]* and even as I speak here, despite the Auditor General has placed in his Report every year that the monies from the lottery funds should be placed in the Consolidated Fund, where it can come to this Parliament for proper appropriation to be made as we did a few moments ago, question the expenditure, even at this moment the lottery funds is outside the ambit of this Legislative Assembly. So the very first amendment of this Law has resulted in criminalisation at the highest level; and criminalisation means in the

highest sense a crime which is a breach of the law, who ever it is done by.

But let me move from the Constitution, because I establish that it is possible that the present administration, does not agree with this sovereignty belongs to the people and so we have to take our guide from what the Government represents to the people of this country, in what I referred to last week as a social contract; an outline of what the Government said, it will do in order to bring about genuine development of this country and no better place is that located, in what is normally regarded as the Policy Direction of the Government, as the life of any newly elected administration. In the UK, it is the Queen who goes to the Parliament and she reads the speech, but it is really the speech prepared by the Prime Minister, so what that elected Labour or Conservative will do. In the country of Guyana, we have the President's Address, which sets out very clearly so we can understand what is the direction that this country intends to take. This I believe is what the people of Guyana expects this Parliament to follow and I am looking here at an address by His Excellency the President to the Ninth Parliament on the 28 September, 2006. It is said here that the President's name must not be used to influence any discussion under the rules, but I crave your indulgence, that I am not using it to influence any debate; I am using it, because this is the property of the Parliament and the direction which he gave in this very House and I quote from the Speech made on the 28 September, I would not burden the

House with the entire speech, but I looked at Page 4 of this document and it is entitled:

DIVISION

Mr Speaker, in the next five years, my Government will work towards the political, economic and social transformation of our country. All of our people will have equal access to resources and benefit from economic development and improvement in social conditions.

But he goes on:

The core elements of the task towards political transformation will include constitution legislative reforms that will involve all political parties represented in Parliament and the wider civil society. The underlying pillars of the new political framework will include meaningful engagement with all political parties, reform of legislation, judicial branches of Government and continuous engagement of the progressive civil society in the governance of this country.

And at Page 6 this is what the President said to this Assembly:

Mr Speaker, central to our vision is the fashioning of an inclusive democratic one, where the rule of law is paramount,

where the rights of our people are respected and where all stakeholders feel involved, valued and respected.

Well I do not think that a lot of religious people feel respected after the presentation in this House last week, but that is another point. *[Applause]*

I use this Speech Mde Speaker, to emphasize that if one were to forget the Constitution and look at what we were guided would be the major trust in this Parliament; we will understand that the Government promised and give an undertaking to move in a particular direction.

I would just like to conclude by quoting from Page 14 of this very document and the speaker said:

Mr Speaker, I see exciting opportunities in our infrastructure development. Consistent with the National Development Strategy ...

I want to repeat:

Consistent with the National Development Strategy, our goal of developing an integrated co-infrastructure project and so on, that provides a deep water port harbour, rail link and all of that.

So here we are pointing that there is some consistency with the National Development Strategy.

We heard in this House of the great economic prospects that this Bill will bring and that a little later this afternoon we will be regaled with statistics from other countries, United Kingdom, South Africa and perhaps some of the references we heard in the previous debate last week as to what casino gambling did for other countries and yet the very gentlemen who is relying on these studies, on these important findings, could not point to one study done to tell us what will happen to casino gambling in Guyana.

It does not strike them that if they are putting in place something that they themselves admit that has all of these effects that the Minister himself rattled out. I do not even have to speak about them, the Minister has told us of all the money laundering, rise of crime and all those things.

Therefore he has not seen it fit, but he relies on studies in other countries, to tell us that because statistics were good then they should practice it in Guyana. He refers to the United Kingdom being a Meca of internet gambling, but he does not refer to the fact that the United States Congress just passed a law prohibiting internet gambling, because of what it was doing to their economy *[Applause]* We can use all of these developments from around the world to justify this argument one way or the other and I said so last week, but ultimately it depends upon what we want in Guyana, not what happen in South Africa, what happen in the United Kingdom, but what we the people of Guyana think is good for us here today *[Applause]* We do not want to hear about two-thirds of the people in the United Kingdom enjoying it. You

have ninety-five percent of the population saying hold your hand do not do it now and you railroad them and tell them that you know best what is good for this country.

But I return to the National Development Strategy, which the President in his 28 September Address to the nation told us this country will move and in this document - National Development Strategy - I have perused it seriously over the last few days to see if I could even find the word *gambling* mentioned. I would be happy even if the word is mentioned *en passant* in this document. I have searched. I have seen what will happen with technology, energy, transport, sugar, rice, agricultural institutions, fisheries, forestry, water, mining, manufacturing, education, health, tourism. So I got to see what the NDS tells us about tourism, because we are regaled with all kinds of economic arguments and I will be waiting this afternoon to hear of these benefits that will accrue to Guyana that will completely outweigh the negative effects of it. But according to this document, under Tourism and this is the broad overview of the National Development Strategy, the Government speaks not about casinos, they are saying by 2010, the contribution of tourism to the GDP, would have overtaken that of many of the traditionally important sectors in our economy. So they are projecting this, quite rightfully and therefore, there must have been a plan as to how that would be achieved. This would have come about because of the implementation of a strong tourism development strategy in NDS, which include a range of intensive

development in this sector and they speak about National Park, protected areas, national monuments to be established and maintained, special training courses, and a number of other benefits, but not a word about gambling.

In other words, when you go to the details of this tourism section of the National Development Strategy, which is found in Chapter 20 of the National Development Strategy, there is a full description of the basic features of the sector, how Foreign Exchange is going to be generated, how we are going to get a larger tax base, human resource development and most of all, the promotion of rural and interior development and it is stated here, nature-base tourism will form the major emphasis, adventure tourism, multi-destination tourism, heritage and cultural tourism, cruise-ship for eco-tourist, eco-tourist and it ends up at Paragraph 20. 12 (viii) as follows and I quote:

Guyana is ideally placed to take advantage of eco-tourism, which is currently the fastest growing segment of the tourism industry, because of two basic comparative advantages.

And it goes on to speak about flora, fauna, rain forest, water falls, rivers, creeks and that Guyana is an English speaking country.

Why one worry to go to such lengths to deal with this matter?. I go to such lengths because the Government has gone to such excessive in laying the foundation for the argument to permit casino gambling, to suggest

that casino gambling really is the real rescue mission for Guyana's economy. That is how it is being marketed. Without casino gambling, we would die because we will be told of the great statistics which we get from other countries, statistics of income and benefits to other countries that will automatically accrue to Guyana, once we approve this casino gambling Legislation.

I want to submit that there is no solid economic basis upon which the Government can justify casino gambling as the major fillip to the development of Guyana's tourist economy, since the very pronouncement by the Government itself indicates that there are many options available to this country, which if followed can provide the basis upon which we can develop a rich tourist economy without proceeding to violate the wishes of ninety-five percent of our population and offend the moral and religious views of lots of our people in this country.

Mde Speaker, the Honourable Minister seeks to tell us, do not worry about a thing we have laws, only not Guyanese, I do not think he actually said that, I think he said only residents of the hotel. But it is always the saying that he, *who is without sin, let him cast the first stone*. I am not

without sin ... [*Interruption: 'We know that'*] have been, but I want to let the Minister know that I speak with authority on this subject, I cannot speak about

lotteries, I have never bought a lottery ticket in Guyana, never. Once I bought a lottery ticket somewhere in Chicago, when I went in a store. I believe in the sweat of my brow that I shall eat bread. I am telling you frankly, I am telling you the facts. I was in the Bahamas a few years ago, representing this Government at a CARICOM Minister's Meeting and I think the Hon Oscar Phillips was our Honorary Consul. So a section of this hotel had Casino and looking for entertainment that evening, he said to me let us go to this Casino. So I visited the Casino so I have seen Casinos and how they operate and as I got into the Casino, because I was a Government Official and a guest to the Hotel, the top management of the hotel said that no Bahamians can gamble in that Casino, but I can assure you that night, I was shown many who had lines; who were Bahamians and who were gambling even and straight in the Casino. So I am not impressed with all this fancy debates. I have seen it at work. There is a law there that says only visitors and non-Bahamians can gamble. I have been in there, I have seen it. Once you have the right credentials, you can go through. So Oscar Phillips took me in there and I said well let me go, it is the first time I have gone into a Casino some years ago, so I looked round and I saw dazzling lights, dancing ladies, bunnies and all sorts of things. [Laughter] So I am telling the Minister if he has not been in, I am telling him. I have seen all these things, but what was significant, because I met the top management, they said to me Minister, are you planning to indulge? I said well it is the first time, I am telling you, I said yes, I plan to change \$200 tonight and the management

said to me, Minister do not waste your money - I am telling you. He said, I will give you \$2,000 worth of chits, because you cannot win the Casino, we have it all fixed. I want you to understand what I am telling you that was my first experience. They showed me all the fancy cameras over each table and all the inner operations of the Casino, completely rigged for robbery - completely rigged - I saw inside out of it. So I am not speaking with second-hand information and the entire staff in there, with the exception of the few supervisors, who are looking at the cameras, they were Bahamians, who live in the country, who were frequenting there all the time they were the main source of entertainment for all visitors as they come in. So when you think you are doing something for visitors, who is going to entertain these visitors which is a normal trade; who are going to be the bunnies, who are going to be the people who are going to provide the entertainment in the casino, who are going to be paid for many other favours to this operation? So do not come Mr Minister in the *holier-than-thou* arrangement to convince this House that because this law is stating that this gambling or this Casino arrangement is going to be restricted to guests of the hotel, if indeed the spill-off effects are going to be what you predict; you are providing an opportunity for citizens of Guyana to be exposed to many things. So let us not fool the public about this operation. I speak with some knowledge on this matter and therefore when I say it is not healthy for this nation at this time, I speak with full knowledge of what can happen. I speak with authority on this area and to say that it is eminently better than terrorist training and bombing

people in homes, killing the Abrahams family and all of that, so do not let us get into that. So what I am saying is that we are here in this House - in this National Assembly of the Parliament of Guyana - to make laws for the peace, order and good governance of this country.

Our constitution mandates us to give sovereignty to the people. The people have expressed their will through the democratic institutions of the land. As I said before in the debate last week, and I do not want to repeat myself, this Parliament is the repository of a Petition from the Christian Community and a letter from the Islamic Community which we discussed last week; we cannot claim not to know the thinking of the religious community. *[Interruption]*

The Acting Speaker: Time, Honourable Member

Mrs Deborah J Backer: Mde Speaker, I move that the Honourable Member be given fifteen minutes to continue his presentation?

Question put and agreed to.

Mr Robert H.O Corbin: Thank you Mde Speaker, I shall not be much longer. I have drawn attention to the fact that the Government itself is in breach of its own commitment given to us, of what they intended to pursue in terms of economic development of this country. We have full economic development

programmes, I do not want to go to the 2006 budget, I walk with that to show all the statistics we were regale with, the various economic strategies, I believe Mr Murray may deal with that, that is what Government said will be the answer to our country, transforming Guyana through modernisation of partnership and the Government said to us, this can be done without casino gambling. Why then the haste Mr Minister to rush this legislation through today in this Parliament without any consultation with the people? I say to you there could be no other explanation if we exclude all. As you say it is not the World Cup, what is the haste? If as you say it is not in keeping with some prior commitment given since February of 2006 to drug lords in this country; if it is not in keeping with that; if it is not in keeping with any desire of the Government to enter into arrangements outside of this House and give commitments to the under-world, then there is no rush. Then I would think that the most decent thing to do, when such large sections of the population are concerned, would be to delay; hold your hand; wait a while and see if you can convince us that indeed perhaps we may be misguided. I am not saying that you are going to convince all of us, but I believe that by demonstrating your belief in the Constitution and practicing the inclusive democracy, which you pledged to do, you will again restore some respectability to this Parliament, which I believe is moving in dangerous grounds this afternoon by madly pursuing this Casino Gambling Legislation, which is rejected by the majority of people in this country. Thank you.
[Applause]

The Acting Speaker: The Honourable Minister of Tourism, Industry and Commerce

Hon Manniram Prashad: Mde Speaker, I rise to support to Gambling Prevention (Amendment) Bill.

As the Honourable Leader of the Opposition said he thought that I am supporting him. I would like to support him in this respect and thank him for elucidating some very salient points in the National Development Strategy on the Tourism Sector. If I remember correctly, when those discussions were taking place many years ago, I think I was either Chairman of the Private Sector Commission or President of the Chamber of Commerce, I cannot remember which one; but our representative on that body was Mr Bookmohan, who is no longer with us. I remember him reporting at the Private Sector - I cannot remember which one it was whether it was the PSC or the Chamber at that time - that the discussion centred around the PNC's representative and the PPP's representative, actually talking about casino at that time. The objection came from civil society, but there was a lot of discussions, even though in the National Development Strategy there was a lot of talk about the potential of Guyana, the floral and fauna, the natural beauty of the land and the odds, and tourist's destination and all these things about nature tourism and adventure tourism. Let me say that casino gambling was discussed at that time even though it

was not included in the document. So I thank you elucidating those points, Mr Corbin.

Let me from the start emphasize my deepest respect for the Churches, the Mandirs, the Mosque, the Pastors, the Pundits and the Imams, I have great admiration for the social work that they are engaged in, especially work among the poor.

Today, the Church can send petitions, they can send letters and they can oppose publicly because of democracy. There was a time when they dare not oppose anything. Do you remember Father Dark - the faith that Father Dark met with? I just to remind you of what used to happen at that time?

Mde Speaker, I have many friends who are Christians, Hindus and Muslims, who support casino gambling. I also have many friends, religious friends who oppose casino gambling, but that is their democratic right to oppose or propose. I respect and appreciate their views even though Mr Corbin said it is a vote of conscience. Within the opposition ranks, I am sure there may be some one who supports casino gambling. On this side of the House, I was not told how to vote; I also have my conscious vote. So let us make that clear.

Mde Speaker, even on this side of the House, there may be someone who is not happy with this piece of Legislation. I do not know. We know the Opposition is in Parliament and they are to oppose, even though they see and they are aware of the tremendous social benefits that this Legislation will bring to the poor

throughout Guyana, including members from their constituents but they will oppose, because that is what they are here for - oppose - opposition members oppose.

Mde Speaker, if this Bill is perused carefully, you will recognised that there are a series of conditions that must be adhered to before one can be permitted to enter a casino. For instance -

- a worker could be admitted in a casino or must be admitted, obviously;
- a paying guest accommodated in a room of the hotel or resort complex in respect of which the casino premises licence for the casino was issued;
- a person who holds a valid international passport or other internationally recognised travel documents issued by a country or territory other than Guyana, or
- a person who holds a permit or resident status that enable that person to reside permanently in a country or territory other than Guyana.

Mde Speaker, these conditions are here because of our respect to civil society and because of respect to the churches for the work that they are doing, that is why we are following the Bahamas model and we are limiting people who can enter a casino even though we are publicly attacked by the private sector. One private sector leader was telling me that everything is alright, but he is strongly against this Bill, because

Guyanese will not be permitted to walk in and gamble. We are protecting the poor, because poor people cannot walk into a casino; normally in any country this is high-end gambling; poor people can go and buy a lottery ticket. I just want to bring that point out. In fact, I respect the views of the church. This Government in recognising the importance of religion, in our multi-ethnic and multi-cultural society is actually encouraging faith-based and religious tourism. Yesterday, I received a letter from a religious organisation, who is coming here in July with about two hundred tourists to hold a convention and they have asked permission to use the Guyana International Convention Centre. Mde Speaker, I recognised that there is a small minority of citizens, who do not support casinos on the ill-conceived notion that this form of gambling will bring social ills to this country. I challenge any one in this Parliament or out of Parliament and the anti-casino lobbyist to name one vice that does not already exist in Guyana, which this legislation will promote. *[Interruption: 'Let us legalise drugs']* There are authorities to regulate that Honourable Member; I will come to that just now.

Mde Speaker, there exist already strong laws ...and this is the Honourable Member Murray...to deal with any infringement. Section 32 of the amendments of this Bill provides for the Minister to establish a gaming authority to regulate, restrict, monitor, suspend or revoke any licences for any breach of condition. This is crucial, all over the world this is where lies the power of regulation.

Mde Speaker, Members of the Opposition, religious leaders, fellow Guyanese, in your midst there are people who support and those who do not support this Bill, even though there is an overwhelming majority of supporters. Let me assure you that Section 32 of this Bill makes adequate provision to address these concerns. Section 32 (a): *To establish a gaming authority or authorise it to give any other body or person any power, duty or function considered by the Minister to be necessary for his administration of Sections 27 - 31.* This section includes Casino Regulations. This would not be a wild-west scene; this would be regulated according to the gaming authority. The Institute for Study of Commercial Gaming at the University of Macao is not for profit-gaming research as the development organisation that was established in 2003. The mission of this ISCG is to build bridges between the theories and practices of gaming in Macao and across Asia. By doing so, it hoped to develop a better understanding of the gaming entertainment industry and its impact on all members of society. I will read this part to you, because some time last week we had a motion and we talked about the University of Guyana students. Now, listen to this:

In light of its mission, the Institute for the Study of Commercial Gaming (ISCG) seeks to establish strong intellectual foundations for responsible gaming. Inject fresh and innovative ideas into gaming management and provide world-class education to faculty members and

students of the University of Macao who are interested in gaming.

Think about the University of Guyana.

IFSG conduct research on all theoretical and operational aspects of gaming, which include economic and social impact of gaming; gaming laws and regulations; gaming surveillance and technology; casino marketing and management and other issues arising from gaming operations. It brings together legal experts from various areas such as mathematics and statistics, economics, law, management, marketing, information system, sociology, history and psychology. ISCG regularly provides advice to Government policy makers on issues related to gaming regulations and help gaming operators, to solve practical problems arising directly from gaming operations.

Our University can probably, down the line, assist in providing some of these functions, when we are fully established in accordance with regulations such as these; not just the casino aspect of it, but also the social impact.

As far as the issuing of three casinos licenses per region ... [*Interruption: 'Thirty'*] No, three per region and there are ten regions, so not thirty per region - there's a maximum of three per region. Now, let me

tell you, that there is nothing sinister about three per region, because the Government would like to see all the regions benefiting from casino tourism; why must Linden be deprived of a casino? Why must four casinos be in Georgetown only? Why must Linden be deprived of economic development? Why must New Amsterdam be deprived of economic development? Why must Rupununi be deprived of economic development? Because casino owners of hoteliers would normally come where there is a huge population and a large work force and where the economy is thriving, so therefore the Government would have to steer this kind of investments in the outlying regions and that is the reason for three casinos licences per region so there is nothing sinister about that, because I heard somebody on the television talking about that. Now, we believe in the free market system. You will get that from the private sector.

Macao has transferred itself from a manufacturing economy centered on textile into a service oriented economy, focusing on tourism including gambling. Tourism contributes around forty percent of Macao's GDP. Almost one-third of Macao's workforce is employed in the tourist industry. The Government has placed high priority on training people for the sector with the enthusiastic support from major hotels in the territory. Macao's Institute on Tourism Education has provided the industry with a professional highly regarded in the

region and recognised by the European Union.

We can understand there is also an institute that is down the line. With your support we can work on that.

The EU has selected the institute as a centre of tourism know-how for the entire Asian region. That is how successful it is and supported the provision of European experts in relevant fields, to train future leaders in the hotel and hospitality industry of Asia. The Institute is also a member of a network of Asia/Pacific Education Training Institute (APETIT): an initiative of the UN Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific (ESCAP) to promote social and economic development of countries in the region.

Macao has now been known as the Monte Carlo of the Orient ...

I do not know how many of you ... I think the Honourable Leader of the Opposition and Mr Winston Murray smiled when I said Monte Carlo and Mr Anthony Vieira would probably know, there was Monte Carlo in Guyana many years ago. Do you remember we used to have Monte Carlo at the Pegasus; years ago there was a fund raising? Many years ago there was Monte Carlo. I do not know, probably Raphael would know what I am talking about

quietly, but he may not want to say it, but I know of a prominent legal family was involved in organising Monte Carlo in Guyana many yeas ago...
[Interruption: 'You know about it.'] Yes, I know about it. Monte Carlo was already established in Guyana.

Macao has long been known as the Monte Carlo of the Orient for the two excitements it offered to Tourists from around world - casino and motor sport. Gambling accounts for some sixty-four percent of all tourism revenue. While gambling attracts many visitors, Macao's diverse attractions namely:

- *well-preserved architectural heritage... like what we have here, St George's Cathedral, et cetera*
- *and glamorous events confirmed the City's destiny as an entry port where different cultures meet and merge making it a precious gem with unique splendour.*

Religious leaders must be vigilant also. They must study their legislation carefully and must guide and shepherd their flock away from casinos, which most of them will not qualify to enter anyway. The onus also

is for religious leaders to educate their members not to gamble; they must do more work, and educate them also, because they are against casino gambling, Theologically no Church, no Mandir, no Mosque support gambling in any form. We know that and we respect the churches, we love the churches, the Temples, the Mandirs, we love the religious leaders and we must respect them and that is why we worked with them; that is why we had consultation.

Mde Speaker, the bottom line is, if you are so against casino gambling; do not go to casinos or do not visit countries that support casinos. Some of those countries that we visit, for those of us who oppose casinos; casinos contribute significantly to the tourism sector and is a main source of revenue for the economy. So when you go to another country and you want to use the health care - many of us go to North America to use the health care - remember casino may contribute to that, so do not visit.

Mde Speaker, Honourable Members of this Assembly, I am sure that we all recognised the dangers of smoking and alcoholism. Living in a civilised society, we have to respect the views and habits of all citizens and administer laws that treat all sectors of the society fairly. For instance, we do not ban cigarette smoking, because some of us do not smoke, but we may be civilised and restrict smoking in the corridors of Parliament or outside of Parliament or in Chamber, but we do not ban cigarette smoking, because it is bad. Also we do not ban alcohol because some of us do not drink. We saw what happened during the prohibition period, which give rise to the Mafia, et cetera. Do you

remember that Al Capone and De Lenje in those days? We do not ban things just because we do not like it. That is uncivilised. We do not ban some things; people must have choices. We did not ban flour; we did not ban split peas; we did not ban potatoes; we brought them back.

Mde Speaker, Guyana's Tourism Industry was expected to contribute 2.1 percent to gross domestic products in 2006 or US\$17.6M. When we compared our GDP with that of Belize which is 8.9 percent and with that of Costa Rica which was 7.1 percent, we are way behind. We have to have activities that can increase our GDP from the tourism sectors. I will tell you why I mentioned Belize in particular and Costa Rica, because those are prime eco-tourism destinations and if we are to move forward we have to link with Belize and Costa Rica. I was in London at World Travel Market and I had discussions with Belize and Costa Rica and they were very helpful, because we have the same products. In fact, the people from the Birdening Association - the Vent-Bird - actually rated Guyana even higher next to Peru. So we are right up there or even better than Costa Rica and Belize. If we can reach to that stage when people in North America and Europe want to go to a tourism destination, they can say let us go to Costa Rica or Belize or Guyana, we would have achieved something, because our name would have been called in the same breath as Costa Rica and Belize. That is not happening now. Costa Rica and Belize have casino gambling. People come; they do the jungle trek; their nature trail and then in the evening, they want to relax. They have an option

to go to a casino. When you look at that and Guyana has no casino, we are out. So we must be realistic and be competitive. I know we do not like it, but that is life. It is a modern way of thinking.

Mde Speaker, travel and tourism is a high-growth activity, which is forecast to increase its total economic activities by 4.2 percent per annum worldwide over the next ten years. Guyana cannot be left behind; we must adapt and change and bring modern techniques of attracting tourist into Guyana.

I urge you, Members of the Opposition to think back and support this Amendment. In the interest of raising the standard of living of the poor people in Guyana this is necessary. This is a necessity and I urge you to support this amendment. Thank you, Mde Speaker.
[Applause]

The Acting Speaker: The Honourable Member Mrs Volda Lawrence

Mrs Volda A Lawrence: Mde Speaker, it is a well known fact that I oppose casino gambling. Mde Speaker, it is also a known fact that for quite some time now the Government has become a huge source of income for this cash-strapped Government.

The utterances of Dr Leslie Ramsammy as seen on the Caribbean Media Corporation, CMC Website, stating that casino gambling is a key pillar of the Government's economic development plan, erasing

any doubt about the direction the Government wants to take this unwilling nation.

Mde Speaker, as this National Assembly debates the Gambling Prevention (Amendment) Bill 2006, it seems that the Government has lost two of its faculties. Those are:

- hearing and
- seeing.

Notwithstanding the many calls from the various sections of our society, a petition by the Christian Community, a motion laid and debated, various press conferences and statements, picketing exercises, marches and vigils, and most of all the call to prayer. The Government has intractably refused to heed calls for far-reaching consultations through thorough research and most of all consideration of the social impact on our society.

Mde Speaker, I am like the growing multitude of concern Guyanese, do acknowledge that globally gambling contributes to the coffers of Governments, but while we can quantify its contribution in hard figures, we are unable to accurately put a figure on its devastation of social values. *[Applause]* To date, no one has been able to even estimate the average economic and social cost incurred in managing the problems of part-time more so addicted gamblers. It is against this background of uncertainty that the majority of Guyanese oppose this nefarious legislation. The majority strongly believe that our nation lacks the necessary social infrastructure and its institutions are totally unequipped to deal effectively with the

universally acknowledged negative impact and consequences of casino gambling. So, let us stay clear of anecdotes, dubious assertions due to inertia or untrustworthy speculations and evaluate the fiscal cost of casino gambling on this struggling economy which is dependant on debt write-offs from international financial institutions, and buttressed, according to the US 2006 Drug Report, on the joining of the illegal drug underworld.

Gambling attracts crime and would demand an increase in the recruitment of law officers. We all know that Guyanese have been spurring, drafting into the Police Force, enlistment into the army or even recruitment into the Prison Service. Murder, rape, arm robbery and unsolved murders are at an all-time high. Joint services or not, the Government has consistently failed to protect its citizenry in the face of escalating urban crime as well as rural incursions by a few armed gangs. What are Guyanese to expect when this beleaguered State by which its reprehensible Casino Bill makes it necessary for high-stake gamblers to take drastic measures to protect their winnings or forcibly recruit their losses with violence? We are all grappling to develop frameworks to manage poverty, family neglect, divorce related issues, assault and battery, homelessness, child abuse, and a travails of an ever growing number of street children. We on this side of the House, believe we are about to shoot ourselves in the foot by adding another layer of social problems on top of the mountain of unresolved problems that already haunt us. *[Applause]*

We are now facilitating all the increases of these situations in the midst of our undeniable inability to deal with those we now encounter as part of our present environment. Mde Speaker, I need not go further to describe the agonizingly, excruciating, self-inflicting pain we are about to unleash on a reluctant Republic. None of us can claim ignorance of these social battles we face as a people. We in this august House must recognise that the failure or success of any business development may depend entirely on whether the revenues collected are sufficient to fully compensate a State and its local communities taking into account the additional capital and operational cost of that facility.

Mde Speaker, casinos or gambling do not only bring with it enormous social cost, but also infrastructure demand services such as water and sewage, public health, law enforcement, emergency medical response, fire protection, a better functioning judicial and prison system and social assistance enforcement. Mde Speaker, the citizens of this country are currently in need of these very social and infrastructure facilities, which are found wanting in many areas. You may say that I am naïve, but I truly believe that it is the responsibility of Government to care for its peoples and to look out for their welfare. Instead, what we have is a situation where just like the casinos our Government is gambling with our destiny.

I challenge the Government to take this Bill to a referendum [*Applause* Mde Speaker, some persons believe that their disgusting rhetoric and threats can silence the religious community which represents a

large number of this 730,000+odd multi-racial and multi-religious nation. The People's National Congress Reform-One Guyana believes the biblical injunction that *where there is no vision the people perish*. That verse refers to a vision of law and Guyanese have accurately discern the dangers inherent therein and have rejected this Casino Bill, which the Government wants to enact. We know that politics is not spectator's sport and all Guyanese must feel comfortable, safe and be willing to put their shoulders to the wheel in the National Development Trust.

As he travelled the road to Damascus to persecute the Saints, the Lord told Saul thus and I quote: *It is hard for thee to kick against the creek...* Last week the Honourable Members Ms Desrey Fox and Mr Clement Rohee tried to kick the religious bodies verbally; when they launched a sarcastic, vicious and shamelessly uninformed attack on the churches. We can all recall Honourable Member Rohee's now infamous words that the State should ignore the views of those who appeal to certain doctrines. This is a dangerous development in this multi-religious nation and seems to signal some secret crusade against religious bodies that disagree with such aspects of the Government's development agenda.

Mde Speaker, Honourable Member Rohee's ominous statement, signals the intensifying of an undeclared war against opposing views generally and more specifically that of the church. It would seem that the Stabroek Newspaper is the first casualty of the Government's secret, but detailed five -year plan try to trample people's right and crush all opposition.

[Applause] While the Honourable Member Mr Rohee flagrantly assaulted the erudite views of those eminently more qualified people than himself, he offered the Nation his own poison brew, promising them their own economic resurrection. I remind this Honourable House of what First Corinthians 15:33 said:

Do not be deceived: and mislead, evil companionships, communion, association, corrupt and we praise good manners and morals and characters.

Mde Speaker, the Hon Desrey Fox in her presentation two Thursdays ago, in response to the Motion brought by the Honourable Member Mrs Holder, lashed out at the religious bodies, who dare to speak out against the introduction of casino gambling in Guyana. She denounced them for not speaking out against other social ills, but Honourable Members, there is a reference in the Holy Bible which states that and I quote:

You first take the beam out of your own eye then you will see clearly to remove the mote out of your brother's eye.

[Applause]

To date Honourable Members, have you ever heard the Honourable Member Ms Fox speaking on those injustices meted out to Guyanese people or have you ever seen her on a picketing exercise or showing support of even to the Mothers in Black? As a matter of fact, have you ever seen Honourable Member Ms

Fox at any forum, discussing the welfare and/or development of women? What I do know, is that the Indigenous people would welcome some more attention from the Honourable Member Ms Fox. *[Applause]* When Honourable Member Ms Fox spoke so disparagingly about the church, she did not tell those in this Honourable House that she owes much of her development to this august Institution - the church - whose fundamental teachings are that they are three morally legitimate ways for money or possessions to pass from one to another. I assure this Honourable House that gambling does not appear among them. *[Applause]* May I remind the Honourable Members Fox and Rohee and this Honourable House that the church in March 2006, voiced their concerns over the implementation over casino gambling and was promised that they would be engaged in due process of consultation. This did not materialise. As a result, the church began to air its views through the media and having been overlooked, sought to have a petition laid in this House only to be rebutted by a tongue-lashing in a most crude manner, derogatory remarks and threats by those on the Government's side

Mde Speaker, the church has a voice which must be heard.

Mde Speaker, in concluding, I wish to propose that in view of the large number of Guyanese irrespective of race, creed or religion, who oppose the licensing of casino gambling in Guyana that this Bill is taken to a referendum *[Applause]* May God be merciful to those who support this Bill and bring damnation to our nation. Thank you *[Applause]*

The Acting Speaker: The Honourable Member Mr Raphael Trotman

Mr Raphael GC Trotman: Mde Speaker, I rise to offer my contributions acutely aware that the debate is becoming highly personalised. In fact, it began that way last week and I trust that we can conduct ourselves in a mature and responsible way this evening and in the days ahead and try to avoid the emotionalism and sensationalism, which perhaps characterises the form of debate outside of the House, that I hope is the way we can proceed.

It is unfortunate that the Honourable Member, the new Minister of Tourism, has absented himself for this Debate after making his presentation, especially because we are told that the thrust of this Bill - this new initiative - is to benefit tourism and I would have preferred him to be present.

Before I speak to the Bill itself, I should state a few points, a disclaimer on behalf of the Trotman's family that we had nothing to do with or have had anything to do with in the past, present and in the future with anything known as Monte Carlo or any other institution of gambling or ill repute in Guyana or elsewhere.

Secondly, I heard the speaker from that side saying that his vote is one of conscience and that those Members of that side are exercising vote of conscience

and I wondered whether what he is saying is in consonance with what Dr Luncheon is saying.

Quoted in today's newspaper and I refer to the Kaieteur News of Friday, 19 January 2007 rather when asked, that is Dr Luncheon about the likelihood of a conscience vote, Dr Luncheon said that the Members of the Government's side of the House discussed the issue at Cabinet and there was no opposition. He said that in the House the vote would represent collective responsibility. I believe he echoed the sentiments of the PPP/ C's General Secretary, who said that there shall be no vote of conscience and that Members of the Government's side whether they be ordinary Members or Ministers, must vote according to the heavy, heavy whip that is being put against them [*Interruption: 'Ow, Shame! Shame! Shame!'*] So Honourable Member Mr Manniram Prashad, I hope that he understands that his conscience will not allow him to vote other than in favour of the Bill.

Mde Speaker, on the 27 December 1902 rather, this House then known as the Court of Policy - thanks to our seminars of recent times - passed the Gambling Prevention Act. We were led to believe from research that there was unanimous support in the Court of Policy for the Bill then or what could be termed a Bill from the time of its introduction. Today, some 104/105 years after, this Parliament - this House - is being asked to revert that which was made illegal one century ago.

My research also tells me that the two most despised vices in 1902 were gambling and prostitution. At the

administration, to deal effectively with our present security situation that the Minister seeks to assure this House, that we must approve this legislation on the basis of the fact, that he has plans or he has some plans to avoid the evils which he knows will follow the introduction and implementation of this Casino Gambling Bill this afternoon.

The Minister also sought to locate his presentation in our supreme law, but I too, would like to locate my presentation, I have already located it first of all in the prayers which we all subscribe to at every sitting of this Parliament. So I have located it in the religious and moral context which we all subscribe to, but I locate it now in the Constitutional Framework which guides this country our supreme law and Article 9, Chapter 2 states very clearly that sovereignty belongs to the people, who exercise it through their representatives at the democratic organs established by and under this Constitution.

I understand that this National Institution - the Parliament - is supposed to give reality to the sovereignty of the people of this country through what we do here in this National Assembly.

As I looked at the Stabroek News, Thursday January 18, 2007, and I would like to quote for the records what this newspaper states, because I think it puts it succinctly rather than dealing with petitions already before this House and I quote Page 3:

*The Bahai, Christian, Hindu and Muslim
Communities, have issued a joint call to*

gambling is now going to be legal and there shall be a gaming authority and you are being asked without more to support it. Unfortunately, Mde Speaker, I am unable tonight to support this Bill.

Our Government's intention to introduce casino gambling comes at a time when our sister CARICOM Nation Trinidad & Tobago a nation which Dr Ramsammy used by way of example last week at a press briefing held with the Prime Minister; had moved to make gambling in all of its forms illegal, having trifled and experimented with it, has now taken a Government policy decision before matters became out of hand and get worse to cease any activity regarding casino gambling.

In a recent edition of what is referred to *As All Gaming News* - gaming and gambling is a billion dollar industry that has lobbyist, news and events. There is a publication known as *All Gaming News*, and I refer to a publication of October 2006 in which it was said:

In a move that comes on the heels of a recent ban on casino slot machines, conservative Prime Minister, Patrick Manning ...

They are trying now to taint him

...alleges that gambling in any form, strange family relations and encourages the proliferation of vices. Manning would also like the country's national lottery as well to be disbanded. Saying

that gambling activities are of great concerns to his Government, Manning has yet to set a timetable or manner of enforcing the impending anti-gambling measure.

The Government of Trinidad & Tobago is also as I said, set to end on-line gambling through computers. So while we rush with undue haste to pass this legislation, we have not even seen it fit perhaps to consider the views, the opinions and the experiences of our neighbour, which best resembles our own societal make-up that has been perhaps the best friend Guyana has had. We have not seen a report, the findings of a study, a white paper or anything of the sort laid before this House tonight. I dare say if the principal persons who have already spoken, the Minister of Home Affairs and the Minister of Tourism have not said to this House how they intend to do it, what are the benefits that are to be derived, how they will form the down-sites of gambling, I dare say that we will not expect to hear them at all.

We can consider this Bill and I know that Members on that side think that it is a simple amendment to an ordinary Act without any entrenched constitutional provisions. But I say that this seemingly innocuous simple Amendment has opened up deep fissures and divisions in this country. It has inelegantly and violently flung open the preverbal Pandora's Box forcing us to do some introspection as a nation and as a people. What one century ago was impermissible is today being sought to be made permissible. One only has to look around to see the rapid social degradation

and rapid changes within our society to understand why perhaps the Honourable Prime Minister, who I know is travelling on Government's business to have said and he was quoted in Kaieteur News of 11 January 2007 that -

Those who oppose casino gambling are behind the times.

We have in a manner of speaking, some battles being waged:

the battle between the traditionalist verses or against the modernist;

the battle between those who stand the side of morality verses those who are prepared to seek economic development and sacrifice morality at the sake of expedience.

And now we have a new battle emerging that of the argument of the State verses the Church; and

I believe that there is a fourth battle and that is one that is taking place within the spiritual realms regarding this matter.

What we have today is an epic battle being waged between those who are resisting the withering away of society and those who for reasons best known to themselves are ushering in these changes even against the tide that says no. Every nation faces a defining moment and Guyana's defining moment has reduced into writing and captured in the eleven or so clauses of this

Bill. It will become a crucible directing and determining whether we go left or we go right, backwards or forwards, or whether we can successfully maintain our morality or what is left of it and our stability whilst reaching for new economic horizons.

Madame, I am aware of the time and am wondering whether I can now suspend my debate.

The Acting Speaker: Honourable Member, yes.

Mr Raphael GC Trottrman: Thank you

The Acting Speaker: We will now have to suspend.

19:00H - SUSPENSION OF SITTING

20:05H - RESUMPTION OF SITTING

SUSPENSION OF STANDING ORDER NO. 10(1)

Hon Clement J Rohee: Mde Speaker, with your permission I would like to move the suspension of Standing Order No. 10 (1) for the Assembly to continue the Debate on the Bill uninterrupted until its conclusion

Mr Winston S Murray: Mde Speaker the Standing Orders are very clear on this matter. Under the Standing Order - unless the Standing Orders otherwise provide, notice shall be given of any motion which is proposed to be made with the exception of the following:

and at (d) it says quite clearly -

a motion for the suspension of Standing Order
[Interruption]

The Acting Speaker: Mr Murray what Order you are quoting from?

Mr Winston S Murray: No 30

The Acting Speaker: Standing Order No. 10?

Mr Winston S Murray: No, Standing Order (10) is what they are trying to invoke, but if you look at Standing Order No. 30 it makes it clear that a motion exempt from notice includes, which in this case is what they want to apply - a motion without notice - the exemption includes a motion for the suspension of the Standing Orders put with the leave of the Speaker. The substantive speaker made it abundantly clear prior to this Sitting hear this evening, that such a motion could only be put with his leave. So with great respect to the mover of the motion, he needs to get the leave of yourself, Madame, before this question can be put. It was very pellucid from the substantive speaker that is his interpretation which indeed accords with mine.

Mde Speaker, if I may, the bald motion put by the Honourable Member Mr Rohee, does not set any timeframe for which he is seeking a suspension for this thing to be done. Are we to go here until 6 or 7 or 8 tomorrow morning? I do not know? *[Interruption: 'Why not?']* Sir, I am asking for a clarification that is my right. I am asking for a clarification; I am not saying why not, I am not pronouncing on yeh or nay. I am saying that these are matters that are undetermined, so Mde Speaker, you are being asked to give an open-ended decision for an open-ended extension of Sitting, which I think is appropriate in all the circumstances with a list of twenty-five further speakers to go. In any case Mde Speaker, it is my respectful submission that they require your leave as we need a ruling as to whether you will grant leave in the circumstances in which I am defining the length of the list and the approximate time for which members who have so far spoken have so far spoken. It is approximately half an hour and if you take half an hour by twenty-five it is twelve and a half hours, so are we contemplating to be here twelve and a half hours hence? Is that what is being requested? If so I believe Mde Speaker, that it is wholly unreasonable and inappropriate to subject Members to such a situation. *[Interruption: 'Division!']* Division only with leave of the Speaker, the Speaker has to rule, why do you want to pre-empt the right of the Speaker. Thank you, Mde Speaker

The Acting Speaker: The Honourable Member Mr DeSantos

Mr Bernard C DeSantos: Mde Speaker, it is not often that I find myself disagreeing with my colleague

Mr Murray, but I must disagree with him on this occasion for a number of reasons, which I should presently state.

The application which is being made as I understand it, has not been made yet. Minister Rohee was just intimating to indicate to you Mde Speaker that he wished to move that motion, the motion has not been move as yet, because the motion has to state certain things - its parameters. But let me say this and I hope that I can offer some assistance to your Honour to guide you in your ruling.

The application is made under Standing Order No. 10 (3) and if you notice, it says very clearly:

The Assembly may at any time ...

at any time - that is the first point I make,

... by motion made and carried

By motion made and carried, we must understand who we are, we are servants of the people, this Parliament is supreme; the Parliament makes a decision, it makes a motion and that motion is carried; if it is carried without amendment and debate; there is not going to be any debate on this motion, it may suspend or vary the provisions of Paragraphs 1 and 2 of this Order. Now clearly this is not a motion. I heard the Honourable Member say that this motion requires notice, this does not require a notice; it says clearly. It does not require leave either; it does not say so and what is intended is clear, because it gives the House power to vary the provisions of Paragraphs 1 and 2.

Paragraph 1 delimits the sitting of the Parliament between 2 and 10. The motion seeks to remove that ten o'clock termination period to a period which the motion itself will tell you and that is sufficiently determining when it says that the motion is determined when the debate concludes. In other words, it will be for the duration of the debate. I am not going to enter into any speculation as to whether it will end at 3, 4, 5 or 6, whenever it ends that is the period which the motion deals with, because this House, as I said, is at the service of the people and if the people feel that we have to be at our beds by 10:30h. I do not think they will feel that we are just tired of being here. If their business requires that, we will stay until seven tomorrow morning, so be it and I so submit.

Mr Raphael GC Trotman: Madame before you rule, I would like to be heard and as my learned senior said that he takes pleasure in disagreeing with the Honourable Member Mr Murray, I take no pleasure disagreeing with him now.

Madame, it could not have been intended by the framers and the drafters of this Standing Order that you may suspend these orders to an indefinite period; you may move from 10.00 pm. to 11.00 pm; you may move an adjournment from 7.00 pm perhaps to 8.00 pm, but to have it move to an over-ended situation, I believe, could not have been expected or intended by those who put these Standing Orders together.

Also, whether it comes to interpreting these Standing Orders, you must do so with respect within the framework of what is reasonable; it is unreasonable to

expect that any human being can be expected to debate any motion with any sense of decorum at 3.00 am in the morning. [*Interruption: 'It calls for commitment'*] Some say it calls for commitment, but whatever it is Madame,, during the budget debate, that side adjourns the House and runs away. So you do not know about commitment. So how dear you speak about commitment tonight? All I am saying ... [*Noisy Interruption*]

The Acting Speaker: Alright, please let us have some order.

Mr Raphael GC Trotman: They may call it all kinds of names, but every week the Leader of Government Business ask for us to adjourn and we know that we must function within reason and it is unreasonable to expect that a debate will go on without any definite cut-off time . It could never have been intended that the drafters of this Standing Order intended it to be that way. So I ask you to bear that in mind when you come to rule.

Hon Clement J Rohee: With your permission. The Minutes of the Proceedings of the 7th Sitting of the National Assembly held on Thursday, 11 January 2007 at 2.00 pm and I quote from the Minutes:

Suspension of Standing Order No. 10 (1)

At 9:37 pm the Prime Minister moved a motion for the suspension of Standing Order No 10:1 for the Assembly to continue the debate on the motion uninterrupted until its conclusion. We have had

precedent Mde Speaker, time and again. We have had ... *[Noisy Interruption]* ... May

I, Mde Speaker?

The Acting Speaker: Yes, proceed Honourable Minister

Hon Clement J Rohee: We have had precedent time and again in this Honourable House with respect to debates continuing uninterrupted until its conclusion. I see absolutely no reason now why, as some Members are seeking to do, insert their timeframe on a matter which one Member on that other side of the House earlier in the day by way of a motion, sought to introduce a matter which he considered to be of importance urgent public business.

Mr Winston S. Murray: Mde Speaker, I crave your indulgence to respond to the learned Honourable Member Senior Counsel Mr Bernard De Santos. Madame, the Standing Orders are very clear. I agree fully with the Honourable Senior Counsel that Standing Order No.10 (3) says –

the Assembly may at any time by motion made and carried without amendment or debates suspend ...

No disagreement. However, there are rules that govern how you treat motions; there are rules governing them. I want to refer in particular to Standing Order No. 27 and Standing Order No.30 in that sequence.

Standing Order No. 27 talks about *Notice of Motions or Amendments* and says:

Where under these Standing Order notice is required, such notice shall be given in writing ..., et cetera.

And then under Standing Order No. 30 says clearly *Exception from Notice* and it defines the circumstances and the occasions when notice may be dispensed with. The clear inference is that in all other circumstances notice is required and it is listed under Exemption from Notice:

Unless the Standing Orders otherwise provide, notice shall be given of any motion which is proposed to be made, with the exception of the following -

And at (d) one of the exceptions is a motion for the suspension of Standing Order put with the leave of the Speaker. So Mde Speaker, it seems pellucid that what is required is your leave and then Madame, the motion may be put. There is no dispute about the fact that the motion may be put, but the substantive Speaker has made this pellucid and I do not know why we seem to be questioning it and the interpretation here is clear. So Mde Speaker, all that I am saying is to properly comply with the Standing Orders, your leave must be sought prior to the motion being put and that is by respectful submission, Mde Speaker.

Mr Bernard C DeSantos: Mde Speaker, I hope that I do not have to get up again, because Standing Order No 30 (d) does not refer to this motion. It refers to

motion which you can put with leave. This motion says nothing about leave; the motion does not require your leave and therefore (d) does not apply; (d) only applies to a motion for the suspension of Standing Order put with leave. We do not require leave. The Honourable Minister does not require leave to put this motion, because under Standing Order 10 (3) it is as clear as daylight. Standing Order No. 10 (3) does not speak of leave. *[Noisy Interruption]* Just a moment please! I will tell you why it does not require leave, because it has to be a motion which has been tabled and carried, and therefore it is the ruling of the House which has to be obeyed by the Speaker; the Speaker has no discretion if the House speaks. If the House speaks, the Speaker has to carry it out and that is why it is so. In those cases where the residual discretion remains with the Speaker, the Speaker has the last word, but where in fact this Standing Order does not invest the Speaker with the right to give any leave, it is the House which determines the finality of the matter and when the motion is carried, the House haven spoken the Speaker is bound to comply with respect. I so submit.

Mr Raphael GC Trotman: It seems as if I may have to rise again.

The Acting Speaker: Yes, go ahead.

Mr Raphael GC Trotman: Mde Speaker, this issue must be viewed again in the context of what happened last week, when the substantive Speaker said that the

Prime Minister's motion could only have been put with his leave and that he has the discretion of granting or refusing that leave. There was no objection or challenge made and if we are to have any form of continuity in this House, any sense of how we must conduct our affairs, we cannot one week have something done one way and then the next week change it as if it mattered not the week before. While I agree that the concept was thorough, decisive, the precedent does not hold in this Chamber, and this Chamber for some intent and purposes is considered a court.

Madame, I believe you must be guided by the ruling given only last week by the substantive Speaker from which there was no objection made and if there is any thing at all that your Honour needs to come to a decision, it was the statement made by the Speaker last week, without reservation and without challenge. Thank you.

Hon Manzoor Nadir: Mde Speaker, I am not a lawyer and I do not profess to argue over interpreting the Standing Orders. What I know is my experience in this House and there is no conceivable way that at every sitting we can anticipate that sitting going beyond the stipulated time and so put in the requisite notice. I do agree... [*Interruption: 'Why not?'*] ... Well we can probably start doing it from now. Mde Speaker, I do agree that the Speaker made a statement last week. I do not know if it was a ruling; he did say so in the previous Parliament also that he is not inclined to grant these extensions. He did not say that he would never. The convention Mde Speaker, as we

all know if there are some confusion over this, there are other Parliamentary reference documents including May's that would say that such requests are not unusual and if we are guided not by what is written to the letter of the law, but the convention of Parliamentary Democracies and Houses of Assemblies, we will grant this request.

Hon Clement J Rohee: Mde Chairperson, it is with deep regret that I rise once again to address the Honourable House on this matter and I hope that my fears are not realised. Two things seem to be at play here:

- (i) is the filibuster; and
- (ii) is to misinterpret the rules.

Mde Speaker, I take guidance from Senior Counsel the Honourable Member Mr Bernard De Santos where Standing Order No. 30 it starts out by saying:

Unless the Standing Orders otherwise provide

...

and it is at that point that we revert Standing Order No 10. (3) where it says:

The Assembling at any time by motion made and carried without amendment or debates, suspend or vary the provisions, et cetera.

(Cont'd in Part 3, Page 161)

National Assembly Debates

8th Sitting

14:00h Friday, 19 January 2007

Part 3 of 3

Mde. Speaker, I believe it is very, very clear and therefore I would wish to insist on the motion for the suspension of the Standing Order No. 10 (1) for the Assembly to continue the debate on the motion uninterrupted until such time. I emphasized until *such time* as the third reading may be determined.

The Acting Speaker: Hear is my ruling Honourable Members, it appears to me that Standing Order No. 10 (3) has to be read in conjunction with Standing Order No. 30 (d) and at first you have to have leave for the motion, and then the motion has to be carried without amendments. It is my ruling that you have to read Standing Order 10(3) in conjunction with Standing Order No. 30(d). So you have to have leave to have the suspension of Standing Order 10 (2), because the Standing Orders have to be read together. I mean the whole Standing Orders govern the rules, you cannot take it out piece meal, because if you look at Standing Order No. 10 (3) it says:

... at any time may vary by motion made and carried without amendments

but then when you go to how you do it, Standing Order No. 30 (3) tells you, you do not need notice of motion, you just need the Speaker's leave to do it and that why the Speaker has been doing it; and that is why the last time he sat here, he said that the Prime Minister had to have leave first in order to do it. So it

is leading with the two. Honourable Minister, when I look at the number of speakers, I ask the Whips to see whether they could come together. We have a long list of speakers here. Even if I were mindful of granting the application for the leave, the application is open-ended. It appears to me that Standing Order No.10 gives time, it says from 2.00 pm to 10.00 pm and then when you go to Standing Order No 10 (3) says, you may vary this, but you cannot. I am not mindful of an open-ended variation of this matter, because if you vary it, you have to say well let us go until midnight or something like that, but until the debate closes and I have all of these speakers. I literally will be here until the morning. Honourable Members, after that we have another motion. It is not like the House of Lords where I understand they meet from day to day, but there are some things that when we have issues like these and when we have this number of speakers before me here... If I were to get a reduced number of speakers, then perhaps it will make some sense to me, but with thirty speakers and you are asking for an open-ended request for the debate to continue until all these speakers are exhausted, it is really a bit much, unless you can bring me a reduced list of speakers, perhaps we can. *[Pause]* I mean time, time is going; I ask the Whips, at least the Government's Chief Whip to see during the recess whether she can cut down the number of speakers, but I do not know; it is for the Whips to get together.

Mrs Indranie Chandarpal: Mde Speaker, we are prepared to cut our side of speakers. We have eleven and we are prepared to cut.

Mr Raphael G.C Trotman: Madame, I have just been instructed by my Whip that I dare not stop and that all five of us must speak before the debate ends. I am very sorry, I am very, very sorry about that. *[Interruption: 'You are not sorry at all.']* I am so sorry

Mrs Deborah J Backer: Mde Speaker, I am prepared to meet with the Government's Whip outside to see if we could resolve this matter. I am not prepared to stand here and seek to do it here.

The Acting Speaker: Well, I wish you all can do that. *[Noisy Interruption]* Could we have some order please? I am prepared to suspend the House for another ten minutes so that you will get together to see how we can bring this matter to a closure.

20:30H - SUSPENSION OF SITTING

20:47 H - RESUMPTION OF SITTING

The Honourable Member Mrs Chandarpal

Mrs. Indranie Chandarpal: Mde Chairperson, we were not able to find a compromise and therefore we will have to continue until 22:00h and after that period we will decide when would be the next sitting. Thank you

The Acting Speaker: Alright, the debate now resumes.

**RESUMPTION OF DEBATE ON THE
GAMBLING PREVENTION (AMENDMENT)
BILL 2006 - Bill No 30/2006.**

Mr Raphael GC Trotman: Thank you Mde Speaker. It seems like yesterday since I started. *[Laughter]* I feel that I am going to be here tomorrow and on Monday and Tuesday perhaps, but let us see who knows. I am up in the air right now.

Madame, at the time when we took the adjournment for dinner, I was making the point that we are at this point and time, facing one of Guyana's defining moments and those defining moments have been captured in the eleven or so clauses of this Bill. I was saying that in a sense at the end of this Debate whenever that comes, we will experience a crucible that tells us whether we go left or we go right, whether we maintain morality and do away with hopes of economic development or whether we can actually find a way to preserve both.

There has been much reference made to the National Development Strategy and with each passing debate and each passing week and months, I am now more convinced that within the pages of that document, our future lies and much of what we are doing now, could have been avoided if we had stuck to those recommendations. In those recommendations I believe that the two hundred-odd persons who worked on it, tried to give us just that - a balance:

- between church and State;

- between what is traditional and what is modern;
- between what is needed as against what it is we must do.

So unlike others whom I am sure will follow, I would refrain from entering into the religious aspects of this debate, not that I do not for any moment believe that the arguments raised by the leaders of the Christian, Muslim and Hindu communities are not very strong, potent and sound.

I believe that we can examine this Bill through other lenses and come up with good and sufficient reasons as to why we should have casino gambling or not have casino gambling. I fear, however, that if I were to proceed, even though I am not going to enter into the religious realm without at least making reference to one matter, I would be failing in my duty as a Christian. And that has to do with the reference made last week and I believe rather than me paraphrase it, I would prefer to quote it exactly as it was stated by the Honourable Member Mr Rohee when he stated and I quote from Stabroek News, Friday, 12 January 2007:

I would wish to caution that religious groups who base their arguments upon certain doctrines have no place or should have no place in State decisions.

Madame, very, very important strong powerful words, which I believe will be examined for many years to come in this country and even in the region.

Like the Honourable Member Corbin earlier, I wanted to draw this House's attention to the very prayers which we have read to us at the commencement of every sitting. Almighty God, we who are gathered here do humbly beseech thee to guide us in all our consultations, so that together we may build a land where knowledge is free, where the mind is without fear and the head is held high and where words come from a depth of truth.

Grant us O God Thine aid and guidance so that we may deal justly with the several causes that come before us, laying aside all personal interest, prejudices and personal preferences, so that the result of our counsels may be to the glory of thy Blessed Name.

A few days ago, we were told by Mr Naraine that this prayer in fact was amended, because it tended to be more Christian bias and about two or four decades ago, these prayers were changed so as to be all-encompassing, recognising that in Guyana we do have a strong believe system, recognising that we do require divine guidance from time to time. So my argument is that we have invited divine intervention, all of us not just Christians, but also Muslims Hindus and others who believe in other things as is their right. So we cannot in one regard close the door now by approbating for divine guidance in times of disaster and threatened disorder; before elections there was a lot of praying going on and I saw a lot of Ministers attending; during and after the floods I saw a lot of Ministers and others attending. And now reprobate, when something touches our consciousness and questions our morality, we on this side want the

intervention and the presence of the great architect of the universe and so we will continue to honour those prayers.

I now turn to the Bill itself. Mde., this is a matter which as I said is going to have arguments going for and against. No doubt, I accept based on my own research that casino gambling does bring tremendous revenue to regions, villages, States, countries that have its operations. But my research also tells me that casino gambling brings tremendous social disorder including crime and other attendant problems. I can cite from several reports - this one is entitled *Gambling With Our Future...* a report on casino gambling in one Indian community in the United States and I will quote quickly from it. The first quotation says:

The installation of slot machines at casinos in San Paulo has resulted in a significant rise in calls for emergency service to the casino and has led to increases in specific crimes within the community surrounding the casino.

This report provides a brief history of casino's use of gaming devices. It goes on to say Madame that -

These increases have led to a larger negative impact to the surrounding communities that can be captured by numbers.

It goes on again to say, quoting from another report - *Social and Economic Impact Of Urban Casinos* by

William Evans and Julie Tapolski found that four years after a casino opens bankruptcy rates, violent crimes, auto thefts and larceny rates increases ten percent in counties with a casino.

Furthermore a 2006 study released by the Attorney General, Bill Locheir, suggested that incidents of rape, murder and other types of violent crimes increased in communities with casinos.

So that is one point of view, which I believe we can consider.

Another is contained in a report issued out of Illinois in the United States, a place which is being championed as a bastion of good economic stability, where casinos are thriving, and this report is written by a Doctor at the University of Illinois, his name is Earl Grinnose. The report says:

Owing to the widespread expansion of casinos, the cost of pathological and problem gambling has soared to nearly half the annual cost of drug abuse in the United States.

An expert at the University of Illinois said in a new book.

The social cost of gambling such as increased crime, lost work time, bankruptcies and financial hardships faced by the families of gambling addicts have reached epidemic proportions

costing the economy as much as US \$54B per annum.

So he has written. So Madame, I give you another point of view.

I turn as well to a report contained in the San Francisco Chronicle of 4 June 2006 - *Reviewing Casino Gambling in California*, where it is very popular and I quote from it:

The report provides a snap shot of a fast growing industry in transition, a business that is generating at least US\$13B in annual revenue, but also contributing to a variety of social ills, including gambling addictions and increased crimes.

So, without a doubt, the two go hand-in-hand. Undoubtedly, there are vast benefits to be reaped in terms of monies, but on the other, there are increased problems and that is not to be ignored. At the same time the report says:

Though the casinos contribute a growing number of problems of pathological gamblers, people whose addiction to gambling harms them, their families and their communities.

Another report that shows that it is going to be a trade-off, the more money you want the more your crime is going to increase and your

societal problems will also increase. The decision is ours to make.

Lastly, I wish to refer to a report entitled: *Regional Economic Impact on Casino Gambling* based again on studies of Casino Gambling in Philadelphia in the United States and to quote from this report, I believe was more favourable in terms of having casinos. I believe as a fair debate, I should give both the pros and the cons. This report said:

The economic theory and the preponderance of evidence indicate that the aggregate direct and indirect impact of the construction operation and taxation of casinos are significantly positive. Broader economic cost related to such factors as the use of Government services and changes in property values are not insignificant, but they do not come close to cancelling out the more conventional output income and employment gains. Moreover, these broader negative impacts might be offset by some longer term positive impacts, stemming from increase spending of tax revenue on education, infrastructure and redevelopment

So, I give the other side of the debate that yes, there are benefits, but it depends on the state of the economy; the extent of the regulatory framework; how strong it is; how well put together it is, before we can

decide whether we are ready. My opinion is that we are not.

Madame, I believe that having gone through these reports from other countries, we can now examine our own situation. Again it is unfortunate that we have no study, no guide to tell us how it is that we can operate here in Guyana.

The question comes down to this: can Guyana's economic development gain through casino gambling outweigh the socioeconomic cost? That is the simple question. The short answer is that we just do not know, because we chose not to have a study done, but rather to jump off the cliff without testing how high that cliff really is. And so for those who have the responsibility of making decisions not only for the State, but for the people who live within that State, we expect that *caution* would be the watch word, responsible governance would also be what we demand of them, rather than have us take a plunge without even, as I said earlier, showing to us the white paper, showing to us the empirical data that says, we are committed to this, because we believe based on all that we have read and all the research and all the studies done that it is possible. Only last week, we debated that great Bill dealing with scrap metals. I am told that even the Honourable Prime Minister sometimes personally try to police that industry and he is unable to do so. And so the question I ask is, if the Prime Minister with all of his resources driving around with all of the kings men with him trying to stop copper going out of the country; he is unable to do so. How can he and how can we or any Government now

be able to deal with the problems that this industry is going to create? What comfort do we have that our State agencies are in a position to meet head-on the threats and challenges of organised crime, of bankruptcies, of corruption, of suicide and of addiction.

Madame, I ask again, if we cannot regulate old metal, how can we regulate and curb the unscrupulous money launderer. I will give you another example if we cannot stop the flow precious metal and stones over our borders, how can we stop the narco dollars that may be flowing through a casino?

Tell me and tell us here tonight, where is the specialised unit within the Guyana Police that is trained, equipped and experienced enough to deal with the attending crimes associated with gambling?

Tell me and tell us, how the men and women of the gaming authority would be identified, chosen and insulated from the organised criminals and the temptations which will arise?

Tell us, where is the special fund or facility to address the problems that we know will come? For example, in one place, I found again in Sacramento some of the monies go to two funds which are intended to mitigate the effects of gambling. So from the revenue, a portion is set aside to ensure that the social ills which arise are dealt with. But again this Bill just comes to us in its raw form - eleven clauses. It does not say how much money is going to come that

- we have set up or anticipate the addictional problems;
- we are going to have rehabilitation centres;
- we can curb our money laundering;
- the unit within the Guyana Police Force has been strengthened in anticipation;
- we are going to set aside three percent of the revenues for this purpose.

This is what other countries are doing, but for some inexplicable reason, we are failing to do so, yet we say we are copying other countries, which are doing these things, but for some reason we are not doing so right.

So again I ask how the revenue will be calculated. We are hearing about a lot of money to be made, but we need to have an idea of how much is likely to be coming in, how it is to be collected and by what transparent means we will be doing so. These are questions which remain unanswered. Unfortunately Madame, the two principle proponents of this Bill in the persons of the Minister of Home Affairs and the Minister of Tourism have failed to answer these questions, and I dare say, as I said before, that successive speakers can satisfy us about these things.

I turn now to another very, very distressing situation, which is creeping in... *[Interruption]*

The Acting Speaker: Time now Honourable Member

Mrs Sheila VA Holder: Mde Speaker, I rise to ask that the Honourable Member be permitted fifteen minutes to continue his presentation.

Mr Raphael GC Trotman: Thank you. Yes Madame. I was speaking about the issue of what I termed to be legislation without consultation. I believe and many believe that this Government [*Interruption*]

The Acting Speaker: Honourable Member Mr Trotman, could you stand in there?

Question that -

The Honourable Member be given fifteen minutes to continue.

Put and negatived.

I am saying that the Noes have it. Are we going to a division on this matter?

Mr Raphael GC Trotman: Earlier in the night I heard the word filibuster used, but this is a classic example of filibustering. They are trying to stop me from debating this thing.

Anyway, Madame, I was going on to speak about a new issue ... [*Interruption*]

Hon Manzoor Nadir: Division!

The Acting Speaker: Alright, we will have to take the division, because it seems that you all are throwing everything at me on this first day here.

Mr Trotman, how long more do you have? Can you conclude in fifteen minutes?

Mr Raphael GC Trotman: I can conclude tomorrow ...

The Acting Speaker: Tomorrow!

Mr Rapheal GC Trotman: ... but if you wish, I can try to clip it a bit, but if my honourable friend wants a division, let us have a division on the matter.

The Acting Speaker: Alright! Mr Trotman, can you conclude your presentation in fifteen minutes? If you cannot, we will have to go to the division

Mr Raphael GC Trotman: Madame, I doubt whether I can continue, I believe I will be doing an injustice to myself, if I try to crimp myself to just fifteen minutes with respect to you. I mean no disrespect.

The Acting Speaker: Mr Clerk, can we move to the division on this matter?

FOR

AGAINST

Mr Franklin

Mr Whittaker

Mr Patterson

Mr Seeraj

Ms Smith

Mrs Sahoye-Shury

Mrs Holder	Mr P Persaud
Mr Ramjattan	MrNeendkumar
Mr Trotman	Mr Nandlall
Mr Fernandes	Mr Nagamootoo
Ms Kissoon	Mr Lumumba
Ms Wade	Mr Khan
Dr Austin	Mrs Edwards
Ms Selman	Mr DeSantos
Mr M Williams	Mr Chand
Mrs David-Blair	Mr Atkinson
Mr Elliot	Ms Ali
Mr Norton	Ms Shadick
Mr Danny	Mrs Chandarpal
Mr McAllister	Mr Nokta
Miss Ally	Ms Teixeira
Mr Scott	Mr Ramotar
Mrs Lawrence	Mr Prashad
Dr Norton	Ms Webster
Mr B Williams	Dr Ramsaran
Mr Vieira	Dr Fox

Mrs Backer	Mr Nadir
Mr Murray	Mr Benn
Mr Corbin	Dr Anthony
	Mr Lall
	Dr Westford
	Mr Nawbatt
	Mrs Rodrigues-Birkett
	Dr Ramsammy
	Dr Jeffrey
	Mr Baksh
	Mr Rohee

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Motion negatived

Mr Robert HO Corbin: Honourable Speaker, in view of the attempt to muzzle the Honourable Member in this House, I wish to move another motion that the Honourable Member be given fifteen minutes to conclude his presentation. *[Applause]*

Mr Raphael GC Trotman: May I, Madame?

The Acting Speaker: Mr Trotman, before I put the motion, what were you saying?

Mr Raphael GC Trotman: Madame, I was making the point and quite appropriately this time ...
[Interruption]

The Acting Speaker: Yes, Mr Trotman, you have fifteen minutes to conclude.

Mr Raphael GC Trotman: Thank you. Madame, in a manner of speaking, I gambled and almost lost ...
[Interruption]

Mr Moses V Nagamootoo: Mde. Speaker, on a point of order, a motion is on the floor. I will be very grateful Madame if that motion to ask for the question be put.

Question -

That the Honourable Member be given fifteen minute to conclude

Put and negatived

Mr Raphael GC Trotman: Madame, may I, on a point of order ... *[Interruption]*

The Acting Speaker: It appears that the Noes have it, but let me hear what you have to say.

Mr Raphael GC Trotman: I rise on a point of order and that point of order is this that if the Honourable Members want to shut me down that is perhaps their right to try to do so. At the point in time when Honourable Member Mr Nagamootoo rose, you had already said to Mr Trotman to proceed and my debate was in continuance and for him to take a point of order to stop it, is no point of order. The appropriate time for him to take that point of order should have been before you said I should proceed. *[Applause]* That is my humble opinion, because no objection was taken before you said to proceed and having told me to proceed fairness dictates, Madame, that I be allowed to proceed.

The Acting Speaker: Honourable Member Mr Trotman, I thought I had perceived that there was no objection from this side, so I did not put the question; it was not properly put. Then I permitted you to continue and then Mr Nagamootoo stood up. So it is really my fault not putting the econd motion for you to conclude your presentation. So really it is my fault in not heeding but in the light of Mr Nagamootoo's objection and in the light of the noes, I think I may have to ask you to sit

Mrs Deborah J Backer: Mde Speaker, I would like to ask for a division please.

The Acting Speaker: A division is called for Mr Clerk.

FOR	AGAINST	DECLINED TO VOTE
Mr Franklin	Mr Whittaker	
Mr Patterson	Mr Seeraj	
Ms Smith	Mrs Sahoye-Shury	
Mrs Holder	Mr P Persaud	
Mr Ramjattan	Mr Neendkumar	
Mr Trotman	Mr Nandlall	
Mr Fernandes	Mr Nagamootoo	
Ms Kissoon	Mr Lumumba	
Ms Wade	Mr Khan	
Dr Austin	Mrs Edwards	
Ms Selman		Mr DeSantos
Mr M Williams	Mr Chand	
Mrs David-Blair	Mr Atkinson	
Mr Elliot	Ms Ali	
Mr Norton	Ms Shadick	
Mr Danny	Mrs Chandarpal	
Mr McAllister	Mr Nokta	

Miss Ally	Ms Teixeira
Mr Scott	Mr Ramotar
Mrs Lawrence	Mr Prashad
Dr Norton	Ms Webster
Mr B Williams	Dr Ramsaran
Mr Vieira	Dr Fox
Mrs Backer	Mr Nadir
Mr Murray	Mr Benn
Mr Corbin	Dr Anthony
	Mr Lall
	Dr Westford
	Mr Nawbatt
	Mrs Rodrigues-Birkett
	Dr Ramsammy
	Dr Jeffrey
	Mr Baksh
	Mr Rohee

Motion Negatived

Mr Robert HO Corbin: Mde Speaker, I am in my almost thirty years in this Parliament and I am seeing some unprecedented developments. I beg to move that the Honourable Member be given twelve minutes to conclude his presentation. *[Applause]*

Mr Odinga N Lumumba: I am appealing to you as Speaker, to ensure that this House run in a manner that we all can appreciate all Guyanese. The motion be put is defeated, we cannot continue from twelve minutes to ten minutes ... *[Noisy Interruption]*

The Acting Speaker: Alright, can we have some order in the House. I some how think that I am being taken advantage of. I said this earlier, because it is my first day and every possible motion and every possible Standing Order that could be quoted has already been quoted and has been tested, it is like a baptism of fire. I find there is a measure of irresponsibility on both sides of this House and could we please at this late hour desist from this type of behaviour.

Yes Leader of the Opposition, are you saying something, Sir?

Mr Robert HO Corbin: Honourable Speaker, respectfully to you Madame, I do not wish to put you through a baptism of fire, but we are debating perhaps one of the most controversial pieces of legislation that has come before this Parliament. I have seen on the Scrap Metal Bill we permitted members to speak long

above the time and if the members feel fifteen minutes is too long, all I am asking is for them to exercise their discretion to give three minutes less. This is a very serious Bill. I am not filibustering, the world is looking on and we want to see this resolve for what the President said free and frank debate in the House. It is serious *[Applause]*

The Acting Speaker: Yes, Madame Teixeira.

Ms Gail Teixeira: Mde. Speaker, I will like to propose that the Honourable Member finishes speaking in ten minutes and that's it. No further extensions - to conclude

Question put and agreed on.

Motion carried

The Acting Speaker: Mr Trotman, you may continue, you have ten minutes to conclude.

Mr Raphael GC Trotman: Madame, I thank you; I thank those who rose to allow me to continue the debate and I thank most especially the Leader of the Opposition and the Honourable Member Ms Teixeira for her intervention.

I proceed by saying Madame, that we are entering into a new dispensation as it were and perhaps a most dangerous one and that is the one that said that we are going to be seeing legislation that has no accompanying consultation with it and it is interesting that the attempts to stifle my debate, came at a time when I was going to make this point. Much has

already been said by the religious organisations about not being consulted. I am aware that senior members and functionaries within the tourism sector have not been consulted about this Bill, even though it is being championed as the white stallion and great hope for tourism.

We believe Madame, that as the President rightly said when he came and addressed us, that we must form a new political culture -

- one that sees us consulting with each other,
- one that sees us respecting each other's point of view,
- one that allows us to grow from a place where we were just five years ago.

As I reminded some Members recently, when as a member of the opposition I did not enter this Chamber when the prayers were being read, because of the reference to the health of the President to today, when we can say that the President came here and made what in my view was an exceptional speech. But that speech may only, be one that is both exceptional and historic, if what is contained in it is adhered to, respected and followed. So I expect that in the days ahead, we do not see legislation that comes without consultation.

There was a great cry many centuries ago in the US in Boston that said *No taxation without representation* and I believe that the people of Guyana are saying that we want: *No Legislation without consultation* and that is the cry that must go up.

The great Jurist Gladstone said *nothing can be hostile to religion which is agreeable to justice*. All the people of Guyana want is justice and there has to be no clash between religion and the State if certain things are adhered to. We believe, those on this side need that justice. I will not traverse the individual clauses of this Bill, because I believe that there is nothing within them that require me to traverse. I am totally against this Bill.

I am not impressed with the million dollar fines, as I am aware that trafficking in cocaine, which is a serious offence on the law books and carry serious penalties also thrives in Guyana.

So I am not impressed with the fines set out in this Bill.

I am also not impressed with the powers of a regulatory authority, when the authorities in this country are unable to find and suppress a marauding phantom squad and to control the proliferation of fire-arms in the hands of literally every Tom, Dick and Harry.

Laws mean nothing if those making them have no authority to seek their enforcement.

This Government is resolute in its desire to pass this legislation, but it should give some explanation, as to why before, I believe two months ago, there was literally no statement that we were about to do this. I have traced a few years back to see whether there were hints by colleagues on the other side and this was about to happen and I found in 2002, newspaper

reports, police seize Palm Court slot machines - September 2002. In that report and I may quote from it:

Minister of Tourism, Industry and Commerce, Mr Manzoor Nadir last night maintained his position that Rahaman knew that his Golden Palm Incorporation operations were against the law

He went on to describe gambling as a machine of chance - a one-arm bandit - and a gaming house. This is most interesting as being a public nuisance and cannot be tolerated. I would like to hear him. I believe he will speak after me. How it is that Palm Court was deemed a public nuisance then and what it is today that would allow not one, but the possibility of thirty gaming houses in Guyana? Aren't they not to be considered public nuisances and can't we see the multiplying effect of thirty public nuisances scattered throughout our country?

Madame., I have looked as well at the budget speech of last year - 2006 - and was at pains to find the word gambling in any of its pages and if I may at Page 30 quote quickly, in my ten minutes from the Minister he then was, the Honourable Minister Kowlessar, he said:

Guyana's tourism product continues to grow and attracts significant interest. Much will be devoted to exploiting the

marketing appeal of the country, new tourism products will come, hotel industry will boom, et cetera.

No mention of casino gambling.

I turn as well to speeches made by the Honourable and erstwhile Minister of Tourism 2005 – 2006 *vis-à-vis* tourism and casino gambling, again he mentioned for example the development of three key tourism products and I refer to the Honourable Member Mr Nadir. He said:

- The Rupununi;
- The historic Georgetown; and
- Kaieteur.

Again, we are told nothing about casino being one of the main pillars or planks on which tourism will lie.

My learned colleague directed me to the great Guyana Poverty Reduction Strategy. I am told in its over 250 pages, the words gambling or casino again, does not form part of our economic strategy.

And lastly Madame, I come to the President's Speech made in this Honourable House on 28 September 2006 and if I may quote aspects of it very quickly, and I do so now:

Central to our vision is the fashioning of an inclusive democracy, one where the rule of law is paramount, where the rights of our people are respected and where all stakeholders feel involved, valued and respected.

Our economy must be one capable of generating wealth leading to higher standard of living for our people; one that is sure that every home has access to potable water...

And he goes on. Again, there is no mention of casino gambling.

I do have from him a reference on tourism and with your leave I will quote it:

It is also in this light, that I welcome the emerging sectors of agro-processing, eco-tourism, information technology and aqua-culture. These sectors hold a lot of promise for job creation and in the next five year. My Government will work to ensure that they take root and become the driving force of economic growth and prosperity.

Madame, we would hate to think that there are some things being shown to us and something else being hidden from us. We demand transparency. We have been told that there is a new dispensation one that is inclusive one that is transparent.

As I say these words, I cannot help, but mention as well, as I read the President's fine remarks that there is even as he speaks another injustice and that is going to be the subject of another debate regarding the taking away of advertisements from Stabroek News.

Madame Speaker, I wish to end by saying that we are about to be judged and we will continue to be judged by what it is we are about to do. Unfortunately, as I said, there is nothing which tells us that we are about to enter into something that is going to benefit us in a wholesome and holistic way. With your leave, I just wish to refer to a Guyanese proverb, which I had taken from my aunt's book of recent vintage and use the vernacular which best captures what it is I wish to say and that Guyanese proverb is: *Trouble dey a bush; monkey a bring am a house* – I am not imputing that there are any monkeys around but I do say, that the trouble the casinos bring lie in the bush out there; let us not bring it into the Guyana house. I thank you
[Applause]

The Acting Speaker: The Honourable Minister of Labour

Hon Manzoor Nadir: Mde Speaker, first let me say it was not a pleasure voting against the two motions for the extension of time. In my fifteen years, three terms in the Parliament, this is the first time, yes, it has happen, but I also note that this is the first time during my time in the House that we did not entertain a motion for the extension of the proceedings of the House until we conclude the debate [Applause]

Mde. Speaker, it was a very decent presentation by the last speaker the Honourable Member Mr Trotman. The flaw I find in the argument is that he associated casino

gambling with gambling and talked as if there is no legal gambling that existed in Guyana. That is the point; that the introduction of casino gambling now is Guyana's first taste into gambling as a whole. That is what he made out; that is the jest of his presentation and in quoting all the different references to all the States in America that has casino gambling if one traces you will find that the introduction of casinos in those areas is the first-time gambling in whatever form except at the horseracing track was introduced to the general public. And so I find that argument very flawed.

The other flaw in his argument was that, again he went on as if we are now opening up casino gambling and I would continue to emphasize casino gambling as against gambling as a whole. He went on to make out that casino gambling will be introduced to all and sundry in our society and the issue has been well put to rest by speakers on this side of the House.

Mde. Speaker, we have had gambling in Guyana for a very long time and we thank the Honourable Speaker for the history lessons on origins of the Prevention of Gambling Act and even when it was introduced it allowed for certain forms of gambling that were controlled by the colonials, especially horseracing. Those of you who are as old as I am will remember Durban Park and the white hats in the morning which laid out the prices for odds on the horses. So Mde. Speaker, we have had this gambling for a long time and the Prevention of Gambling Act was aimed not necessarily of preventing Guyanese from gambling in general but from the colonial subjects in the colony

from getting involved in the business. And so, we have the ridiculous position right now that if you have a skittles table and again, I am kind of old and some of you might not remember what a skittles table is, there was one of the first versions of pools after billiards. If you put a skittles table, a billiards table or a pool table in your parlour, by law you have to put a sign saying *No Gambling*. That is how ridiculous the Prevention of Gambling Act was implemented. The point being made is that this Prevention of Gambling Act which the last speaker went on and on about with the high morality, had many exceptions and what we are seeking here to do tonight is to pass amendments to this Act that would introduce casino gambling under certain specific conditions.

Mde. Speaker, I find no paradox in this. The paradox was introduced as he said over a hundred years ago. In fact, long before the internet, Guyanese sent money overseas to bet on horses through the mail. I was very enlightened by a column written by Senior Counsel Miles Fitzpatrick, when he was in the United Kingdom studying, and he said in that column, every day, he would receive a letter from his father and in the letter would be a pound (£) which his father asked him to use to place a bet on a horse in the Lincolnshire Handicap, run-a-downcasted-down, in the United Kingdom. The Lincolnshire Handicap is the first important flat race run in March on the United Kingdom horseracing calendar and the odds he could have betted on that horse three or four months before the race and at forty to one after putting these few dollars to his enjoyment, the horse won, but the point

was that even as far as then, we have people using means to gamble from one place to the other.

Mde. Speaker, Guyanese gamble, but this is not about Guyanese gambling, this is about the introduction of Casino Legislation that will allow for casino gambling, which has many different and in fact the meaning of casino far extends the provision of a gaming house in any watering hole in our city.

And I want to talk to that position 2002, with Golden Palm Casino. We did call up the operator at the time and we said what you are doing is trying to squat on legislation that does not exist and in fact that could be considered the precursor to this Bill, because herein, we started ... The issue there was having these slot-machines and one-arm bandits available to all Guyanese any and every where, in every facility as in some countries and that is what we are all fighting against. There is the religious argument and there is the social-ills' argument also. We moved and said to the operator please put a padlock on the facility until this matter is resolved.

Mde. Speaker. I think someone else on this side dealt with the issue of not rushing the legislation; I will also come back to that. I want to now move quickly to what the Leader of the Opposition said and he took the moral high ground and I want to commend him for practicing a bid of Arabic and he did extremely well with it quoting Sura 5 Verse 90 of the Quran, where the Holy Book admonishes believers to shun gambling and implicit in there is that gambling exists, but you do not go. This is what the Holy Book says. Our Holy

Book also speaks to not being judged by man and I am sure that all of the Holy Books also speak to the fact that we all can, we all have the opportunity to mend our bad ways right down to our last breath.

Mde. Speaker I am sure on the issue of casino gambling, the Honourable Leader of the Opposition, and Brutus was an Honourable man too *[Laughter]* said, he did not intend to mislead the House, but he made two statements, which I found were not too accurate.

The first he said was that the United States move to stop internet gambling because they want to curb the wide-spread gambling by Americans. He did mention the issue of moving to curb internet gambling, but the Americans who controlled the gambling empires, lobbied the Congress to stop Americans from gambling on internet sites that are located in other countries. That is what was stopped, but Americans can gamble on the internet on American sites located in American territory ... *[Interruption]*...and the issue here may not be too accurate and you know he did try to be fair. The issue is that in terms of the transfers by the credit card from America to UK gambling sites, it is about \$40B annually and that is what the Americans who control American gambling lose out to the UK alone. And so you can bet on a UK site and many of us right here in Guyana would be doing that.

Mde Speaker, because of this powerful lobby, we also have the Americans moving through to make online casinos located especially in Central America and the Caribbean illegal and only recently they had made

illegal for Americans to gamble on sites located in Antigua and Barbuda and even make it criminal. Nevertheless, the leading operator of online casinos and I forgot his name, but he is a Canadian who is recently operating out of Central America, he has now relocated to Antigua and Barbuda. But the honourable gentleman, the Leader of the Opposition, I am sure did not intend to mislead. He is an honourable man and Mark Anthony said Brutus was an Honourable man and we Honour him.

The Honourable Leader of the Opposition also give us his experience going into the casino in the Bahamas and I want to believe it was the Merve Griffin Paradise Island Casino at that time, because I think that was the force runner and it is now followed by - as Minister Rohee made last week - Atlantis a magnificent resort that is really catapulted the tourism in the Bahamas. But what he said then, he was advised by the operators of the casino, not to gamble, because it was fixed and how he said fixed, it made me associate *fixed* with *rigged* and he had some experience [*Interruption: 'Very wide experience.'*] No, no, no, he had some experience in the casino I am talking about; no you guys are misinterpreting me, because he went into the casino that was fixed and rigged. Now, this is the issue because these facilities - these one-arm bandits - the electronic gaming machines like our lotteries are programmed to return to the better a minimum percentage of what they wager and it is in the chips now and that is why this casino gaming authority is going to be so necessary. I agree with all of the points raised by the Honourable Member Raphael Trotman.

This gaming authority and if he had done his research on the regulations, regulating casino gambling in any part of the world he would see how complex it is, so that there is by law requirements that need to be observed. We could talk about issuing of policing and all of that, but the gaming authority is intended for that. One of the things is that, to ensure that the operator cannot rig this machine to always win. Similar to the lottery, every time you play on a lottery ticket, you are guaranteed that a percentage of that dollar is going to go towards the taxes in Guyana, the operating expense and a minimum percentage would have to go towards the pot, so that you can win back something. And so Mde Speaker, this issue of fixing the machines or rigging the machines have taken in the context of their rules that will be enshrined in the regulations, so that we can ensure that there is some monitoring of the operations. Mde Speaker, we do not have to go and re-invent the wheel over and over again; we have best practices that we can draw from, from all over the world in terms of putting together these regulations.

As I said, Guyanese in general have the opportunity today to gamble on the internet, to play races from South Africa, Australia, Hong Kong, United Kingdom, America where ever, our book makers in Guyana can also fix odds on almost anything and the biggest revenue earners today is sports betting, not casino gambling and given the licence under which our betting shops which traditionally runs horse racing, they can technically make books on anything including sports. If you cast your minds back to a few years ago

when our President of the Cricket Board of Control was running for the Presidency of the West Indies Cricket Board of Control, there was an objection from the United Kingdom, because he operated a betting shop. Because we can fix odds we are book makers, not betting shops, they are given a licence to make books and that is to provide odds on the chance that something happens. So, Mde. Speaker, these two Honourable gentlemen did give good presentations and I am sure that what I have said, have aptly corrected some of the inaccuracies in those presentations.

Mde Speaker, the debate on casino gambling in my view has been full inside the House and has been full outside of the House and there are basically three/four arguments and we are going to go ad nauseam perhaps here and repeat it. I think, my years in this House have provided me with some discipline to obey the Standing Orders and not repeat what was said before and so Mde. Speaker, I intend to stay within the time that I am originally allotted.

But what has to happen after this full debate, is that there needs to be a decision to go forward and the Government has decided the right it has and we could quote all of the Preambles of the Constitution - the intention, but there is also that moral duty given to the Government - the mandate. We hear this talk about not included in the National Development Strategy, not included in the Manifesto. What are they saying to us? If a new opportunity for this country's development presents itself tomorrow and is not included in any document, we must not take use of it - sorry. We must not take any; any whatsoever

opportunity that comes to us; we must not take that opportunity and exploit it if it is good and decent. Gambling in some holy books, yes it is divine, but I am not a lawyer, but I heard this word bandied around again *mala in se* I think it refers to crimes in themselves, like murder and there is *mala prohibita*.

Mde Speaker, those things which are prohibited by law, like when we ban flour for example all of us who ate it were criminals, right It is *mala prohibita* in that realm, and in the 1950s how Elvis Presley danced was an abomination, yes - wicked, evil.

Mde Speaker the Government had decided that it would go ahead, but it is not going ahead regardless; we are maintaining as if the Government is going ahead with this Bill regardless. Let me say the first time the President introduced this to the religious community was way back in March 2006. Yes! These consultations have guided us and the Honourable Member Mr Trotman now introduces a new thing, *No Legislation without Consultation*. We hear *no Legislation without Regulation; no Legislation without Select Committee*. This House will stand in gridlock. There is noting inherently wrong and I can show you time after time that there are so many consultations even on this Bill.

Mde Speaker I do not want to get into the religious argument and if I incur a wrath of Allah, well I have to answer perhaps my family too.

The issue for me is, are we in Guyana with the introduction of casino going to drive tourism

development? We never said in any document that tourism development is only going to be x, y and z. We said that the plank on which it rests, like our tripod economy of rice, sugar and bauxite, we have other things. We said the plank on which tourism ... and the quotation made by the Honourable Member Raphael Trotman from the speech - I said *Tourism Opportunities*. Did I enumerate all of them, Sir?

And what I will guarantee you is that with the passage of casino legislation, Guyana will become an attractive place for a sector-leader investment in tourism. I also want say to the House that I am confident that this sector-leader investment will come from a reputable investor. We hear talk of, we are rushing this Bill to facilitate drug lords, money laundering and the Honourable Leader of the Opposition made out that this is a wicked sinister Government in collusion with... [*Interruption: 'You said it.'*] He said it. Mde Speaker, you will see a reputable sector-leading investor that we will attract - reputable.

Mde Speaker, there was no rush and let me call name for this legislation to be passed to facilitate a casino at Buddy's International; by no stretch of the imagination whatsoever - none whatsoever. First of all, the gaming authority will take a certain amount of time to put in place, especially when we take all that the Honourable Trotman had said into consideration and that cannot happen before Cricket World Cup. There are some, who are so wicked that they would try to stop any development at whatsoever cost, because good credits will come to the Government so they will stop it at whatever cost. That is why this debate is going to go

on and on into the filibustering mood. Buddy's International Hotel, I hold no brief for him, none whatsoever, but in the Stabroek News it is purported that this is the only reason for casino legislation. When Golden Palm Casino at Palm Courts, Buddy's never had...I never heard him come to me prior to 2005 about any hotel, especially a casino hotel whatsoever. And so it is wicked; it is just sheer wickedness repeated every place in and out. For Buddy's to get a licence there are two stipulations - a hundred and fifty rooms - yes, he has that, but standards. We will only be able to evaluate standards especially after it is completed along with the service. So how will that happen before Cricket World Cup? How will that happen before Cricket World Cup? And this has all generated into a personality issue and an issue of scoring cheap political points whatsoever. That is what it has generated into. *[Applause]*

Mde Speaker, the Honourable mover of the Bill Clement Rohee, asked a question. Do we have the capacity to minimise the negative effects of Casino Gambling? Especially if some of our citizens have the capacity to be a paying guest, some may say no, but we have heard the arguments.

Mde Speaker, last year Atlantic City recorded its best year of revenues from casino gambling a US\$5.2B into the coffers of New Jersey. Eight percent, \$400- odd million were spent on gamblers anonymous, facilities for the disabled, improving social security ... *[Interruption: 'Rohee talk about that already.']* ... You only could talk on commentary, don't talk ... and also to look at our senior citizens. US \$65M were also

collected and spent on redevelopment, those areas that are exactly what you spoke about and the arguments are going to be good as I said on both sides that we have. We stand in Guyana to reap the financial benefits; we also stand being a responsible Government committed to ensuring that we can use the revenues as we have done so successfully with the revenues from the lottery.

Let me say Mde Speaker, I want to touch on the lottery. The national radio bingo and lottery was introduced by whom? And where the money went to? The money went to the National Bingo and Lottery Commission and we did not have any Auditor General pronounce on that; we never saw the report ... *[Interruption: 'That does not justify it.']* It does not justify and I am saying here that I have contention with the opinion.

Mde Speaker, the Honourable Member Mr Clement Rohee also quoted in Stabroek News their prognosis of increasing crime and advanced the argument where this is not the general experience in most countries. This issue of crime and money laundering has been with us for some time and we are dancing to the tune of those who are supplying a lot of aid and we have been complying and not only complying, we have been doing extremely well in terms of putting in place legislation and infrastructure to deal with this. But the Honourable Member Mr Clement Rohee has at his finger-tips responsibility.

Mde Speaker, the concerns of the religious community have been taken into consideration. I say that the

concerns of our opponents have also been considered and Government has tried to provide a working model, not only a working model, a good working model for the introduction of casinos. I urge all Members of the House to give it their unanimous support. Thank you very much. *[Applause]*

The Acting Speaker: Thank you Honourable Minister Nadir

SUSPENSION OF STANDING ORDER 10(1)

Hon Clement J Rohee: Mde Speaker, I would like to move for the suspension of Standing Order 10.1 to allow the House to continue its work up to twelve midnight.

The Acting Speaker: Honourable Minister, I thought we had gone past that stage, because the Honourable Member Mrs Chandarpal, Chief Whip had indicated that we will continue the debate. It is now ten o'clock and I am about to adjourn the House to another date.

Hon Clement J Rohee: Mde Speaker, I think when you asked the two individuals to seek to resolve the issue with having to do with the number of speakers and you did say that you were prepared to look at the time failing the resolution of the issue with respect to the number of speakers.

The Acting Speaker: Honourable Minister Rohee, it is now ten o'clock and we have just finished our final

speaker for the night. I am about to conclude the business of the House today. I think if you had at that time indicated that you wanted to put an end, I did say in my earlier ruling that it was an open-ended application for a continuation of the House and if you had wanted at that time, to signal that you have gone. but not at this time when I am about to rise. *[Pause]* I do not know if you have a continuation of this matter. I still have on record a number of speakers, we only have had six. We have wasted so much time by all of these motions and counting. We could have gone much further ahead. We only concluded six out of our thirty speakers and I am still faced with the number of speakers. *[Interruption]* I do not know, in the circumstances, Mr Rohee as Leader of Government's Business...

[Motion disallowed]

Hon Clement J Rohee: Mde Speaker, I wish to move that the Honourable House stands adjourned until Monday the 22 January 2007

The Acting Speaker: Honourable Members, this concludes our business for today. The Assembly now stands adjourned to Monday, 22 January 2007 at 14:00h

Adjourned Accordingly at 22:03h